Looking to the East:
Chinese Revolutionary Cinema 1949-1966

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Dedication

For Sheila McCarthy,

who gave me a new world

Abstract

The “Seventeen Years” (1949-1966), a period of abundant film production under the communist regime in China, has been called the “missing years” in the historiography of Chinese cinema. Rather than defining films produced during that era simply as “propaganda” in negative terms, this study locates the attractions of Chinese revolutionary cinema as a form of education and entertainment. First, picking up the forgotten threads of socialist internationalism in postcolonial studies, this project highlights the Soviet presence in Chinese film history and the creation of anti-colonial solidarity with Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America in Chinese film discourse. Second, this study seeks to fill an important gap in the global circulation of film theory by looking at how Chinese translators and film critics re-read, redefined, and reinvented Soviet montage and Constantin Stanislavski’s realist acting system through the work of translation. Third, this project turns to various permutations of realism as an aesthetic and an ideology in Chinese revolutionary cinema by establishing a dialogue with socialist realism as an overall communist aesthetic. Contrary to the logic of Cold War binarism, I argue that the creation of a Chinese revolutionary film aesthetics was predicated upon not so much the open refusal to speak the enemy’s language—classical Hollywood narration and Soviet montage—but the translation and tacit appropriation of both for the purpose of creating a revolutionary aesthetics that negotiates foreign cinematic precedents with Chinese aesthetic traditions in literature, opera, drama, and painting.

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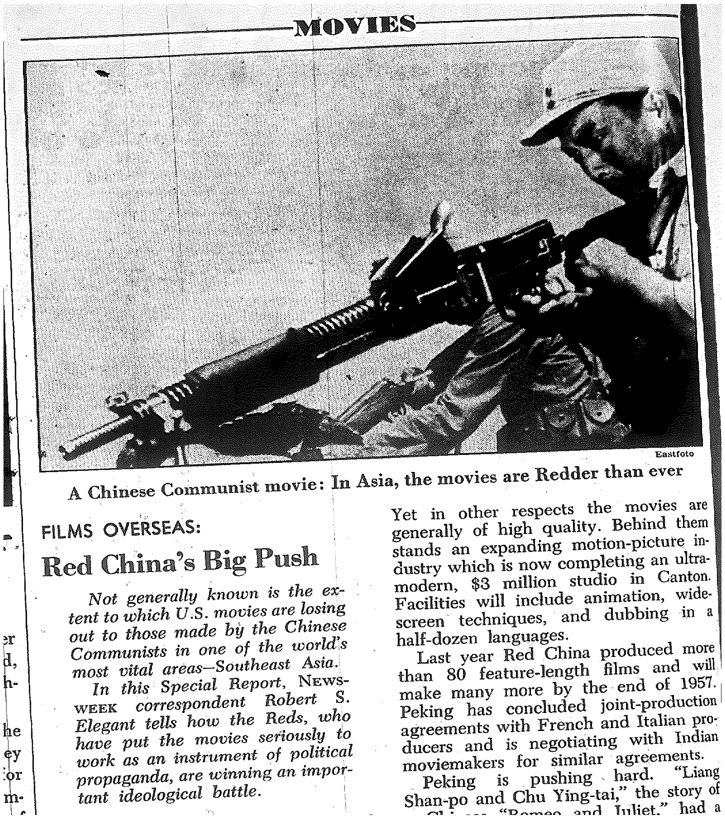
Introduction



MOVIES

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A Chinese Communist movie: In Asia, the movies are Redder than ever

FILMS OVERSEAS:

Red China's Big Push

Not generally known is the extent to which U.S. movies are losing out to those made by the Chinese Communists in one of the world's most vital areas—Southeast Asia.

In this Special Report, NEWSWEEK *correspondent Robert S. Elegant tells how the Reds, who have put the movies seriously to work as an instrument of political propaganda, are winning an important ideological battle.*

Yet in other respects the movies are generally of high quality. Behind them stands an expanding motion-picture industry which is now completing an ultra-modern, $3 million studio in Canton. Facilities will include animation, wide-screen techniques, and dubbing in a half-dozen languages.

Last year Red China produced more than 80 feature-length films and will make many more by the end of 1957. Peking has concluded joint-production agreements with French and Italian producers and is negotiating with Indian moviemakers for similar agreements.

Peking is pushing hard. "Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai," the story of

Figure 1: An article titled "Red China's Big Push" in *Newsweek,* published on September 30, 1957, gives us a few clues to the way in which Chinese movies were read by the American media during the Cold War.

"Redder than Ever"

"Not generally known is the extent to which US movies are *losing out* [my emphasis] to those made by the Chinese Communists in one of the world's most vital areas—Southeast Asia" (Elegant 124). An article titled "Red China's Big Push" in *Newsweek,* published on September 30, 1957, gives us a few clues to the way in which Chinese movies were read by the American media during the Cold War (Figure 1). First, Chinese movies were read as "Red." Accompanying the article is a film still featuring a Chinese soldier loading his gun with the caption "A Chinese Communist movie: In Asia, the movies are Redder than ever" (Elegant 124). "Red" movies as "an instrument of political propaganda" signify "socialist" and "anti-American": "Almost all Communist movies exalt China's 'socialist' experiment and many carry a pointed anti-American message" (Elegant 124).

While the language and visual representation of the article reinforce the idea of "Red" as socialist, militant, and anti-American, a troubled sense of competition and crisis permeates the text. American movies are "losing out" to those made by the Chinese communists as a result of the burgeoning market for Chinese film in Southeast Asia: "In Cambodia . . . Peking's movies have moved into second place in popularity, close behind the Indian films that have dominated the market for years. The traditional runners-up, French and American films are now *farther behind than ever* [my emphasis]" (Elegant 124). The article describes the "Reds" as "pushing hard" and "winning an important ideological battle," while American films are "losing out" (Elegant 124).

What is most interesting about the article is not so much the way its rhetoric creates the Reds as a threat in reinforcing Cold War binaries, but the way it highlights the attraction and artistic refinement of Chinese movies:

> The films, good by any standard, *attract* [my emphasis] especially large audiences when dubbed in local languages. An American motion-picture expert, after examining Peking's productions, observed that they showed "great production values and technical refinements. Unlike Hollywood, the Chinese tailor their product to the Asian market. (Elegant 126)

The article describes Chinese movies as “tailored movies” of “high quality” and “technical refinements,” which allowed China to tap into the overseas market in Southeast Asia (Elegant 124, 126). *Liang Shan-bo and Zhu Ying-tai* (Sang Hu, 1954), for instance, is highlighted by the article: “Peking is pushing hard. ‘Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai,’ the story of a Chinese ‘Romeo and Juliet,’ had a 105-day first run in Singapore, making 100,000 for its exhibitors” (Elegant 124). More than just being “an instrument of political propaganda” that features Chinese soldiers loading their guns, Chinese cinema is conceived here as being capable of producing romance no less attractive and entertaining than *Romeo and Juliet*, thus winning the hearts of an overseas audience.

To my mind, the article in *Newsweek* captures an interesting historical moment as well as a popular imagination of Chinese cinema during the Cold War. Antagonistic as the article may sound in its portrayal of communist China as the ideological enemy who is pushing hard, it nonetheless acknowledges quite openly the attraction and artistic quality of Chinese film. The logic behind could be “know thy enemy” in fear of losing out in the search for overseas market. Nonetheless, the article makes a good call: Take Chinese socialist cinema seriously, for it is more attractive, refined, and complex than one is willing to admit—an instructive lesson for us who study the period from a different historical standpoint.

The Missing Years: 1949-1966

The “Seventeen Years” (1949-1966), a period of abundant film production under the communist regime in China, has been called the “missing years” in addition to the ten years of Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in the historiography of Chinese cinema. In the last three decades, film scholars have begun to historicize early Chinese cinema (that is, before 1949) and situate it in an international context.[1] The most representative of such efforts is Zhang Zhen's book-length study, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937*, published in 2005.[2] In contrast, vast territories of film history during the Seventeen Years remain largely unmapped and unexplored. One of the most recent anthologies on Chinese film, *Chinese Films in Focus II* (2008), includes only one chapter about the Seventeen Years out of the thirty-four chapters in the anthology.[3] Likewise, there is currently only one full-length manuscript devoted to Chinese socialist cinema since 1949—Paul Clark's *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics Since 1949*, published in 1987.

In their introduction to a special journal issue dedicated to the "missing period" (1949-1979) in mainland Chinese cinema, Yomi Braester and Tina Mai Chen (2011) explicate the reasons for the critical oversight in scholarship:

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[1] As Zhang Zhen puts it, "the term 'early cinema' has a quite specific reference in film scholarship in the West. . . . It refers primarily to the cinema—that is, films as well as media intertexts, industry, and market—between 1895 and 1917" (xv). The first Chinese film, *The Battle of Dingjunshan*, was not allegedly made until 1905, and the Chinese film industry only formed in the mid-1920s and matured in the 1930s. The "time lag" between early Euro-American cinema and early Chinese cinema, according to Zhang, "speaks certainly to the semi-colonial nature of Chinese modernity, especially with regard to the 'belated' technological transfer and implementation. Thus, early cinema persists not so much as a rigidly defined aesthetic or period category but as an emblem of modernity, or rather competing versions of modernity, on the 'non-synchronous synchronous' global horizon of film culture" (xviii).

[2] Zhang's study is a major breakthrough in Chinese film studies in the sense that the work considers the development of early Chinese cinema not as an isolated local event, but as a historical event interconnected with world politics and aesthetic trends. Zhang looks at the ways in which Hollywood cinema, as what Miriam Hansen calls "vernacular modernism," was translated, domesticated, and put into local use during the Republican era in semi-colonial Shanghai. Building upon the works of scholars such as Kristine Harris, Leo Ou-fan Lee and Yingjin Zhang (1999) who read early Chinese cinema as constitutive of the urban culture in Shanghai, Zhang re-conceptualizes early Chinese cinema as a form of vernacular modernism in the semi-colonial context of Shanghai, going one step further than previous efforts undertaken by Laikwan Pang (2002) and Vivian Shen (2005) in locating the "left-wing cinema movement" in the historically confined period from 1932 to 1937.

[3] The only article about films produced during the Seventeen Years in the anthology is Robert Chi's "*The Red Detachment of Women*: Resenting, Regendering, Remembering." See Berry, *Chinese Films in Focus II*, 189-196.

> Jian Heyan, in his recent *History of Chinese Film Concepts* (2010), puts his finger on an important factor: the early, productive years of the PRC were later bundled together with the Cultural Revolution, which many Chinese would like to forget (83). The harsh repression during the Cultural Revolution was projected onto the earlier period, despite its output of excellent movies. Similar dynamics, we may argue, influenced reception in the West. Rooted in area studies, China scholars had a hard time reconciling between Maoist totalitarianism and the flourishing of revolutionary art. It was convenient to believe that "brainwashed" artists working under strict control could produce nothing good. (Braester and Chen 6)

While such a belief was "convenient," the *Newsweek* article suggests quite otherwise even in the midst of Cold War sensibility: Movies that were "redder than ever" nonetheless "showed great production values and technical refinements" (Elegant 126). At the heart of the uneasy reconciliation between the negative perception of the communist regime and the attraction of films produced by such a regime is the fearful notion that "Red" is attractive—and it is the aim of this project to probe into that forgotten (or even forbidden) attraction.

The risk in defining Chinese socialist cinema in negative terms is highlighted by Braester and Chen: Studying Chinese cinema from 1949 to 1979 as a "missing period" "risks defining it in negative terms: lackluster compared to old Shanghai movies and the post socialist avant-garde; its creativity politically repressed; and its revolutionary fervor as foreign to Western audiences as to market-minded contemporary Chinese audiences" (7). Indeed, the communist era is often seen as an abnormality and a rupture in history, overshadowed by other periods. While pre-1949 and post-Mao mainland Chinese cinema has received scholarly attention in the last three decades, any significant amount of serious scholarship on Chinese socialist cinema has only just begun.

One of the most noteworthy efforts to integrate the Seventeen Years with Chinese film history in the last two decades is Ban Wang's (1997) treatment of pleasure and desire in Chinese revolutionary cinema. Wang looks anew at what is often in retrospect dismissed as propagandistic and locates sources of pleasure in Chinese revolutionary cinema. By highlighting the sublimation of romance to higher political goals—the "recycling of the individual's libidinal energy for revolutionary purposes"—in Chinese revolutionary film, Wang argues that romance and ideology work hand in hand in Chinese revolutionary film to lure spectators into an aestheticized politics (124). Chris Berry (2004) considers Chinese cinema during the Seventeen Years as a pedagogical cinema and looks at the ways in which its film method constitutes a paradigm that draws heavily upon classical Hollywood narration—for instance, the use of narrative causality, goal-oriented protagonists, narrative suspension for metatextual analysis, elliptical montage sequences, and shot/reverse-shot patterns for pedagogical, rather than libidinal, purposes. Also notable is Stephanie Donald's (2000) idea of the "socialist realist gaze"—a gaze projected to an off-screen space typical in Chinese socialist film, followed by Robert Chi's (2008) analysis of *The Red Detachment of*

Women (*Hongse niangzijun*) (Xie Jin, 1960). Equally important is Tina Mai Chen's (2004) historical research on the circulation and dubbing of Soviet films in communist China.

In the last few years, there have been a few admirable and innovative efforts to integrate Chinese socialist cinema into a world history of the medium. Highly informed by the theoretical apparatus of film studies, scholars have combined close readings of films and archival research with theoretical nuances that complicate our understanding of Chinese socialist cinema. For instance, a 2010 special issue of *The Opera Quarterly* offers multiple perspectives in reading genres such as Chinese opera films produced during the Seventeen Years as well as Cultural Revolution model opera films. In the special issue, scholars such as Weihong Bao (2010) and Xinyu Dong (2010), with theoretical vigor and historical attentiveness, explore Chinese filmmakers' creative negotiation with operatic and cinematic modes of expression. Jason McGrath (2010) turns to the realist tradition and performance studies in his analysis of Cultural Revolution model opera films. On a slightly different trajectory, the spring 2011 special issue of the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* features articles on little-known film genres in the "missing years" such as socialist counter-espionage film and science education film (*kexue jiaoyupian*). While Qi Wang (2011) uses an interdisciplinary approach and looks at architecture and interior design in the historical space of socialist counter-espionage film, Matthew Johnson (2011) situates science education film both within China and internationally. What the aforementioned works share in common is the search for new theoretical and analytical paradigms that reveal the complexities of Chinese socialist cinema, rather than defining it simply as "propaganda" in negative terms.

In terms of Chinese language scholarship, there have been noteworthy publications of film anthology and full-length manuscripts on the Seventeen Years, especially in the last decade. Those works benefit from publications of anthologies of research documents, memoirs, and biographies that have emerged since the 1980s. A few worth mentioning here are Chen Huangmei's *Dangdai Zhongguo dianying* (Contemporary Chinese cinema) (1989), Hong Hong's *Sulian yingxiang yu Zhongguo shiqinian dianying* (Chinese cinema during the Seventeen Years and its Soviet influence) (2008), Meng Liye's *Xin Zhongguo dianying yishu shigao, 1949-1959* (A history of new China's film art) (2002), Qi Xiaoping's *Xianghua ducao: hongse niandai de dianying mingyun* (Fragrant flowers and poisonous weeds: the fate of films during the red years) (2006), and Wu Di's *Zhongguo dianying yanjiu ziliao, 1949-1979* (Research materials on Chinese cinema) (2006). Hong Hong's work, in particular, situates Chinese cinema during the Seventeen Years in the historical context of Sino-Soviet exchange.

The serious scholarship that has emerged both within and outside mainland China in the last few years is accompanied by an increasing public awareness of the "missing period," as well as a renewed interest in the "missed period" (Chinese socialist cinema is viewed, as Braester and Chen suggest, with nostalgia by Chinese audiences). Digital media have made the films accessible to a wide audience, encouraging research, classroom pedagogy, and even popular viewing both within and outside China. In the 2009 New York Film Festival, the Film Society of the Lincoln Center screened an unprecedented series called “(Re)Inventing China: A New Cinema for a New Society, 1949-1966.” In a similar fashion, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 2009, organized a film series called “The People’s Republic of Cinema,” featuring both revolutionary and post-revolutionary films. The screening catalogs of the featured events are not filled with antagonistic language about propaganda produced by the threatening red enemy. Instead, they express sympathetic curiosity about Chinese socialist film as a form of entertainment. For instance, the New York Film Festival website asks: “What kind of balance should [Chinese] filmmakers strike between the education of the masses and their entertainment?”[4] Such a renewed interest opens up enquires about the attraction of Chinese socialist film as a dual form of education and entertainment.

Chinese Revolutionary Cinema: Toward a Definition of an Alternative Aesthetic

What is Chinese revolutionary cinema? A genre? A style of filmmaking? A historical designation of all films produced during the Seventeen Years? Perhaps a better question is: what is not Chinese revolutionary cinema? We soon encounter problems if we define Chinese revolutionary cinema as strictly a genre or an all-inclusive term for all films produced during the Seventeen Years. Far from constituting an aesthetic and thematic unity, films produced during the Seventeen Years are very diverse in terms of genre. To name a few, the most prominent genres are war film, counter-espionage film, biographical film, opera film, animation film, ethnic minority film, comedy, documentary film, science education film, and newsreels. These genres vary in terms of theme and cinematic convention, let alone speaking of a unity in terms of aesthetic style.

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[4] See <http://filmcomment.net/archive/nyff/2009/masterworks.html>.

What is the rationale of putting certain films together under the rubric of "Chinese revolutionary cinema" in this study then? Can we speak of an aesthetic and thematic unity shared by a particular body of works that would provide insights on the historical continuity and discontinuity of filmmaking in China? The first chapter of this project provides an overview of the Seventeen Years (1949-1966), a period of abundant film productions before the onset of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The succeeding chapters turn to a selected group of films produced from 1949 to 1960, which include film adaptations of May Fourth literature, war films, biographical films, and fictional films that either feature apprenticeship of Party members or carry explicit revolutionary messages. My selection of films traces the evolution of a heightened sense of heroism in Chinese revolutionary cinema. The search for a cultural hero is a persistent concern of Chinese cinema before, during, and after the Seventeen Years, and provides a good anchor for the study of Chinese socialist cinema. The epilogue will address some of the continuities and discontinuities between Chinese revolutionary films and model opera films produced during the Cultural Revolution.

Beyond the scope of this study are animation films, opera films, ethnic minority films, and film comedies. Although animation films and opera films were prominent and popular genres, especially in the 1950s, their film aesthetics constitute major differences from fictional films and deserve separate studies, which are appearing in recent years.[5] Ethnic minority films and film comedies are two major (and overlapping) genres that enjoyed popularity in the 1960s. In line with the positive attitude propagated by the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), the generic shift from social satire in the mid-1950s

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[5] See Daisy Yan Du (2012) and the 2010 special issue of *The Opera Quarterly*.

(as a result of the relatively liberal atmosphere of the Hundred Flowers Movement) to the new genre called "eulogistic comedy" (*gesongxing xiji*) in the 1960s is also a thematic shift away from the grand narrative of revolution to a more humanized representation of everyday life in socialist society. Many fictional films produced in the 1960s turned to the mundane and the everyday in order to provide lighthearted entertainment and civic education, which contrasted sharply with earlier fictional films with larger-than-life Party members as positive heroes and heroines.[6] For instance, *Woman Hairdresser* (Ding Ran, 1962), with a sense of humor, conveys the everyday work ethics of an ordinary female protagonist and sheds light on role of women in family and in workplace. Similarly, the ethnic minority films *Five Golden Flowers* (Wang Jiayi, 1958) (a romantic comedy and musical) and *Daji and Her Father* (Wang Jiayi, 1961) (a heart-warming family tale), unlike earlier fictional films that convey revolutionary messages in an all-out and explicit manner, infuse the ideology of the majority Han Chinese as the kind and elder brother to minority ethnicities in a lighthearted and touching manner. In that sense, film comedies and ethnic minority films of the 1960s constitute a different sense of revolutionary heroism (or even humanism), and are thus not the focus of this present study that traces the evolution of a heightened sense of heroism in Chinese revolutionary cinema. By the early 1960s, Chinese revolutionary cinema had achieved the "four excellences" central to the successful creation of positive heroes and heroines on screen—good script, good actors and actresses, good cinematography, and good music (*gushi hao, yanyuan hao, huamian hao, yinyue hao*)—as suggested by Cai Chusheng in 1961 ("The four excellences" 376).

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[6] For more information on the flourishing of film comedy production from 1959 to 1964, see Ying Bao (2008, 2010).

My focus on selected films from the first eleven years of the Seventeen Years does not mean that the discourse on revolution had ceased to exist by the 1960s. Instead, the discourse on revolution extended and expanded abroad, demonstrated by official rhetoric in film magazines that constructed a new kind of socialist internationalism and solidarity with Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin-America. Chapter one, "Fashioning Socialist Internationalism: Chinese Film Journals and Cinematic Exchange during the Seventeen Years," provides an overview of Chinese film journals and cinematic exchange (including international co-productions, documentary films, and newsreels featuring China's allies) throughout the Seventeen Years to open up the rich and complex period for exploration.

Chinese revolutionary cinema constitutes an idea for the communist revolution that has implications for material reality. Although films produced during the Seventeen Years are very diverse in terms of genre and style, they nonetheless all share an underlying vision. Films produced during the Seventeen Years, as a whole, served to (1) establish an independent and self-sufficient national cinema and (2) create a revolutionary aesthetics that negotiates foreign cinematic precedents (classical Hollywood narration, Soviet montage, and Japanese animation techniques, for instance) with Chinese aesthetic traditions in literature, opera, drama, and painting.

Chinese revolutionary cinema, as an idea, carried an aesthetic revolution whose implications are highly political. When I say "aesthetic revolution" and "revolutionary aesthetics," I refer to their aesthetic as well as political dimensions. During the Seventeen Years, film production was as much about aesthetics as economics. Film production was a way to demonstrate a nation's capability for technological development (especially in science education film) and artistic heritage (especially in opera film). In other words, film was a visual showcase that made the Chinese nation's presence and sovereignty known in the world.

Film, because of its reproducibility and popularity, immediately became a political tool and the "cogs and wheels" of revolution, as Mao Zedong (quoting Lenin) put it (474). The indexicality, reproducibility, and visual and audio capacity of the filmic medium render the immediacy of art to the masses effectively. In "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," Walter Benjamin maintains that technological reproducibility shatters the aura of art—originality, authenticity, and "here-and-now"—and opens up possibilities of bringing art to the masses. In the context of Chinese socialist cinema, film technology shattered the aura of art exclusive to the enjoyment of the bourgeoisie and became a powerful entertainment and pedagogical tool in bringing art to the masses.

In his talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942, Mao formulated how revolutionary art should serve the masses: "Since our literature and art are basically for the workers, peasants, and soldiers, 'popularization' means to popularize among the workers, peasants, and soldiers, and 'raising standards' means to advance from their present level" (468). Mao essentially answered the important question of whom art should serve. In the context of socialist cinema, the "for whom" question raised a new concern for spectators as the locus of cinematic experience. How to make film accessible, attractive, pedagogical, and pleasurable for a rural mass audience? As simple as the question may seem, it actually involved (1) a radical rethinking of what constitutes cinematic attraction and (2) a reformulation of film method (for instance, classical Hollywood narration, Soviet montage, and even acting style) in order to produce films that are both political and pleasurable. The rethinking and reformulation of those theoretical as well as technical issues constituted an aesthetic revolution and resulted in the creation of a revolutionary aesthetics in every sense of the word.

What did an aesthetic revolution do? What purpose did it serve? I argue that Chinese revolutionary cinema strived to create what I call an "alternative aesthetic"—an aesthetic alternative to Hollywood cinema as a hegemonic cultural form that traveled in the name of the global. The strongest resistance against the hegemony of Hollywood cinema has been staged by proponents of third cinema, whose genesis as a Latin American film movement in the 1960s coincided with the maturation of the new socialist cinema in the PRC. In the following, I tease out the formulations of third cinema, not so much to subsume Chinese revolutionary cinema under the rubric of third cinema, but to broaden the historical and theoretical scope of what I call an aesthetic alternative to Hollywood cinema as a worldwide phenomenon as a result of the anti-colonial movements in the 1960s.

Written in 1969 by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema" puts forward the tenets of the Latin American film movement and articulates decolonization in the 1960s as a "new historical situation": "Ten years of the Cuban

Revolution, the Vietnamese struggle, and the development of a worldwide liberation movement whose driving force is to be found in the Third World countries.” As a movement against neocolonialism and capitalism in the 1960s, the Latin American film movement included the Cuban documentary film movement and underground or semipublic showings of third cinema films such as “pamphlet films, didactic films, report films, essay films, witness-bearing films,” and other documentary and educational films in Third World countries such as Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay (Solanas and Getino).

The idea of “third cinema” was directly opposed to “first cinema,” that is, Hollywood entertainment film: “The 35mm camera, 24 frames per second, arc lights, and a commercial place of exhibition for audiences were conceived not to gratuitously transmit any ideology, but to satisfy, in the first place, the cultural and surplus value needs of a specific ideology, of a specific worldview: that of US finance capital” (Solanas and Getino). Solanas and Getino criticized first cinema as a “surplus value cinema” for capital accumulation. According to them, first cinema, as a form of consumer good and entertainment, played the “acculturating role of the colonization of taste and consciousness” (Solanas and Getino). Third cinema, as opposed to first cinema, employed films for political and cultural ends and resisted the separation of politics and art. In contrast to “second cinema”—European art film or auteur film, third cinema is not “a vehicle for personal expression,” but is a “collective revolutionary activism” and a “cinema of liberation” (Solanas and Getino).

How was Chinese revolutionary cinema implicated in the framework of first, second, and third cinema, precisely at a time when anti-colonial movements and post-Bandung Third World solidarity were at their height in the 1960s? Chinese revolutionary cinema constitutes an alternative aesthetic that is closer to third cinema in principle but tacitly adopts some of the conventions of first and second cinema. Like third cinema, Chinese revolutionary cinema positioned itself against Hollywood cinema and away from European auteur films in principle. In terms of cinematic conventions, the use of montage and low/high-angle shots to accentuate power relations between the oppressed and oppressing classes is a common feature shared by third cinema and Chinese revolutionary cinema.[7] However, the use of close-up shots and camera movements motivated by individual psychology, as well as the mixed use of both professional and non-professional actors to create heroic icons, differentiates Chinese revolutionary cinema from third cinema and aligns it more closely with Hollywood entertainment cinema. Most importantly, Chinese revolutionary cinema creatively retains the entertainment value of fictional films (a foremost concern of Hollywood cinema) to strengthen the educational and political impact of cinema as a form of entertainment and instruction.

Although Chinese revolutionary cinema cannot be subsumed under the category of third cinema, it can be situated along the spectrum as an alternative aesthetic that resists or deviates from Hollywood cinema despite its tacit appropriation of certain Hollywood conventions for different ends.

Socialist Internationalism: A Forgotten Thread in Postcolonial Studies

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[7] I refer to the set of cinematic conventions of third cinema laid out by Teshome H. Gabriel, 46-47.

This project picks up a neglected thread in postcolonial studies—socialist internationalism. As terms such as the "global" and the "transnational" have become commonplace in cultural discourse, socialist internationalism and the prominence of the nation in anti-colonial efforts have become less talked about. At the heart of socialist internationalism is its anti-colonial (not postcolonial) stance. Timothy A. Brennan points to the "anti-colonial energies of the Soviet idea" and "anti-colonialism's communist currents" in interwar Marxism (192-193). According to Brennan:

> [T]he different mapping of influences and conceptual novelties from the interwar period eventually leads us to the forbidding subject of the Russian Revolution. This Revolution—present everywhere and nowhere in our intellectual lives, and crowding analysis like a vulgar intrusion or a fearful threat—created a full-blown culture of anti-imperialism for the first time, and it is striking and deeply revealing that the topic has been so carefully avoided in the postcolonial discussion. (191)

The Russian Revolution was a source of excitement and inspiration for Chinese writers and filmmakers, who, in their translation of Russian literature and introduction of Soviet film into China in the interwar period, fashioned an anti-imperial sentiment (sentiment of the "oppressed") and an "Eastern" impulse as an antithesis to the West (to be discussed later in this introduction). Chinese revolutionary cinema as an idea and as a material reality is partly an outcome of that sentiment. A serious historical study of such a cinema inevitably has to address the anti-colonial liberation movement, the widespread culture of anti-imperialism, and the conscious alliance among socialist countries that created socialist internationalism in the post-Bandung era. As Brennan puts it, "postcolonial studies descended in altered form from the anti-colonial liberation movements whose most intense interval stretched from 1947 to 1979. . . . The confusions underlying postcolonial studies' self-image (and the fight over theory within it) lie in the fact that the tendency derived from a parentage it sought to suppress" (188). The case of Chinese revolutionary cinema in the Seventeen Years helps us to look beyond Europe in locating interwar Marxism and the ensuing anti-colonial liberation movements.

The scope of socialist internationalism and cinematic alliance among socialist countries was unprecedented, demonstrated by the popularity of international film weeks, film festivals, and the international circulation of film as a result of dubbing, subtitling, and international collaboration, all of which will be discussed in chapter one. The elimination of Hollywood movies after 1951 left an ideological void to be replaced by socialist internationalism as an ideological alternative. Considering the succeeding Soviet tie (as well as the end of that tie) and the new ties with other Asian, African, and Latin American countries during the Cold War, socialist internationalism is crucial in putting Chinese revolutionary cinema in historical perspective.

The attempt to define Chinese cinema as "socialist" underwent modifications in its various stages of development and became a highly malleable term during the Cold War. The fashioning of socialist internationalism underwent two major stages of development: (1) learning from the "Soviet elder brother" in the early 1950s; and (2) the envisioning of Afro-Asian-Latin-American brotherhood in the post-Bandung era and after the Sino-Soviet split in the mid-1950s. During the Sino-Soviet split, communist China asserted itself as the leader of socialist internationalism against the two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union. The creation of a Chinese revolutionary film aesthetics was part of the self-positioning of the Chinese communist regime as the leader of the "East" in an oppositional stance against the "West" during the Cold War.

Contrary to the logic of Cold War binarism, I argue that the creation of a Chinese revolutionary film aesthetics as an alternative aesthetic was predicated upon not so much the open refusal to speak the enemy's language—classical Hollywood narration and Soviet montage—but the translation and tacit appropriation of both. Even though Hollywood movies were officially eliminated after 1951 and Soviet socialist realism was no longer officially encouraged in China after Khrushchev's de-Stalinization in 1956, the two persisted in subtle forms and cross-fertilized with Chinese aesthetics to culminate in "a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism" (*geming xianshi zhuyi yu geming langman zhuyi xiangjiehe*), which was formulated by Mao Zedong and officially announced by Zhou Yang in 1958. Chinese revolutionary cinema in the Seventeen Years inherited the legacy of May Fourth progressive aspirations; it was also coupled with Hollywood influence during the Republican era, as well as the influence of Soviet socialist realism during the communist era, to eventually become what I call a Chinese revolutionary film aesthetics as an alternative aesthetic at the apex of film culture in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The Soviet Presence in Chinese Film History

This project takes great care to highlight the continuity between Republican cinema and socialist cinema in the Seventeen Years. The aesthetic experiment in film production during the Seventeen Years is a continuation of the modernization project since the May Fourth movement, a cultural movement in response to imperialism in the early twentieth century. As Paul Clark suggests, film was “the dominant artistic mode in the continuing May Fourth meditation on the condition of modern China” (6). To understand Chinese socialist cinema in the Seventeen Years, one has to trace the continuities and discontinuities of Chinese filmmaking as part of the modernization project since the Republican era (1911-1949).

To confine Chinese revolutionary cinema strictly within the historical period of the Seventeen Years poses interpretive problems. As Braester and Chen suggest, the “assumptions that socialist film is categorically different from films produced in other political and ideological contexts also mean that studies tend to treat PRC film separately from pre-1949 Chinese film” (10). Braester and Chen call for a “historiographical rethinking of the relationship between pre- and post-1949 history” and highlight film as not merely a reflector but also a participant in “articulating Chinese socialism and the PRC as a nation state” (9). In this project, I trace the Soviet presence in Chinese film history since the Republican era and throughout the Seventeen Years as a way to provide an alternative historiography of Chinese film history. As mentioned earlier, Miriam Hansen explores early Shanghai cinema under the framework of “vernacular modernism” to refer to “the diversity of ways in which Hollywood cinema was translated and reconfigured in local and translocal contexts of reception” (341). On the same trajectory, Zhang Zhen, using the framework of “vernacular modernism,” traces the beginnings of early Chinese cinema and its entanglements with Hollywood cinema in semi-colonial Shanghai. However, little attention has been paid to the Soviet presence as an alternative to Hollywood.

The roots of Chinese revolutionary cinema can be traced back to the Republican era, when socially progressive and even revolutionary films such as *Daybreak* (Sun Yu, 1934) were made to expose social ills and to express support for revolution. Those films were retrospectively associated with the left-wing cinema movement that began in the early 1930s. Many left-wing filmmakers were sympathetic to Soviet films that were introduced into China at the time. In the following, I trace the beginnings of what I call the romantic fashioning of the “East” in Chinese literary and cinematic imagination in the Republican era. The fashioning of a cultural and aesthetic bond with Russian letters and Soviet film was not an isolated event in the communist era, but had its beginnings in the early twentieth century as a response to imperialism.

Looking to the East

Beginning in the early 1930s, Soviet Russia was conceived by many Chinese left-wing filmmakers as the answer to the questions that confronted Chinese cinema. Despite the brute political fact of Russian imperialism in China, the October Revolution in 1917 provided a source of excitement for many Chinese intellectuals, who envisioned constituting a force against the political, economic, and cultural challenge of the West. In doing so, they looked to Russia for inspiration.

In *The History of the Russian Revolution* (1932), Leon Trotsky describes Russia in the following manner:

> Russia stood not only geographically, but also socially and historically, between Europe and Asia. She was marked off from the European West, but also from the Asiatic East . . . The East gave her the Tartar yoke, which entered as an important element into the structure of the Russian state. The West was a still more threatening foe—but at the same time a teacher. Russia was unable to settle in the forms of the East because she was continually having to adapt herself to military and economic pressure from the West. (Trotsky, *Russian Revolution* 26)

In Trotsky's description, Russia is like a giant with one leg stretching to the West and another to the East. The Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, in his engagement with Chinese philosophical texts in the last five years of his life up to 1910, conceived Russia as part of the Orient and described China as Russia's Asiatic brother. In a letter written in 1905, Tolstoy maintains that "the Chinese, like all of us, should develop their spiritual powers instead of striving for technological improvements, which only create harm if the soul be turned the wrong way. . . . A spiritual bond exists between the two great peoples, Russian and Chinese . . . they should work hand in hand" (Bodde 49). Tolstoy conceived the Chinese and the Russians as agrarian people being exploited by industrialized Western Europe. The affinity Tolstoy perceived was not only economic (in terms of the primarily agrarian mode of production), but also "spiritual," and it is precisely this ideological calling that gives Tolstoy's mapping of the world along the cultural poles of the Orient and the West its rhetorical power.

In "Letter to a Chinese," written in 1906, Tolstoy writes:

> A great upheaval in the life of humanity is taking place in our time, and that in this upheaval China, as the head of the peoples of the Orient, must play an important role. It seems to me that the role of the oriental people of China, Persia, Turkey, India, Russia, and perhaps also Japan, (if it is not completely entangled in the net of the corruption of European civilization) consists in showing to the world the right way to freedom. (quoted in Bodde 52)

The upheaval Tolstoy refers to is imperialism, and he sees Russia as part of the Orient in alliance with nations that are east of industrialized Europe. Tolstoy's mapping is certainly a kind of geographic imagination, but it is one that imagines collectivity and speaks of collective resistance rather than a reverse Orientalism that advocates Western inferiority and Oriental superiority.

Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869) itself is a cultural mapping of Russia and an attempt to define Russianness and the Russian soul (русская душа) away from Western Europe. For Tolstoy, the Russian soul lies not in European Russia spoiled by French cultural infiltration, but in the unspoiled Russian soil. Russia as a nation in *War and Peace* is a protagonist with one leg standing on European Russia and another on the Russian soil with its Slavic, Eastern, and even Asiatic roots. Tolstoy's characters are aligned along the dichotomy between Europe and Russia, and the work, as Tolstoy insists, is not a novel but an organic musical piece with rhythms of various individual lives wavering between that dichotomy in the entire span of the work, which is as much about the rhythm of life itself as about the history of war and peace during the Napoleonic Wars. Anisia and Karataev are the representatives of the Russian people (народ) and the embodiment of the Russian soul, where the rhythm of a Russian life plays to the fullest. The rhythms of their movements are roundish, swift, and smooth, and Natasha Rostova, Tolstoy's enchanting treasure, possesses in her movement a Russian air (русский дух) that flows and intoxicates everyone around her as she dances gracefully and beautifully in the farm house on Russian soil. This is the most "Russian" moment of the entire work, and Tolstoy favors the characters who seize that moment, when the rhythm of a Russian life is in full swing. When Pierre is at peace with himself like Karataev, the rhythm of his life plays to the fullest. When Pierre and Natasha are infatuated by the Kuragins in high society, they speak French and the rhythm of their lives falls apart. Whenever Andrei and Marya lose sight of the present life and seek the answer in death, they speak French and their spark of life fades away. Tolstoy's characters oscillate between Europe and Russia, the high society of St. Petersburg and the Russian soil, war and peace, life and death, good and bad—and happiness is within the reach of those characters who seize the Russian soul and the Russian moments that lie at the center of the Tolstoyan universe, which, as Edward Wasiolek metaphorically puts it, is like an onion whose core of a good Russian life is revealed by peeling off all that which obscures that Russianness and goodness. For Tolstoy, Europe is that which obscures the Slavic, Eastern, and Asiatic Russian soul and soil.

The perceived affinity between China and Russia, as well as the sidestepping of their military rivalries that underpins that refashioned affinity, is not manifested in Tolstoy's writings alone. In the Chinese literary imagination, Lu Xun, one of the first writers who introduced Russian literature into China, created an Eastern sensibility and brotherhood with Soviet Russia through the work of translation based on what he saw as a shared identity as the "oppressed." The October Revolution in 1917 was a crucial moment that inspired Lu Xun, and the later stage of his career turned increasingly Russian in terms of his translation projects and his introduction of Russian woodblock prints into China. Lu Xun's translation projects largely focused on Nikolai Gogol (Lu Xun had drawn on Gogol's satire and comic depiction in his fashioning of the national character as caricatured in "The True Story of Ah Q") and works that were later categorized under "socialist realism" in the 1930s. In an essay titled "Celebrating Sino-Russian Literary Encounter" (1932), Lu Xun writes:

> At that time I saw Russian literature. At that time I learned that Russian literature is our tutor and friend. In literature, I saw the gentle soul of the oppressed, their sorrow, and their struggle. . . . How could we not know that the Russian Empire was invading China at that time? Yet, from literature, I understood an important thing: there are two kinds of people in the world—the oppressors and the oppressed! ("Zhu Zhong'e" 474)

By eliding the fact of Russian imperialism in China, Lu Xun asserts a separate aesthetic sphere on the cultural plane in the name of literature. Having separated the aesthetic and the literary from the political, Lu Xun can define Russian literature as a literature of the "oppressed"—and therefore redefines Russia itself as an "oppressed" nation akin to China. This is a crucial and tactical move on the part of Lu Xun, for only then can a cultural and aesthetic relationship with Russia be fashioned in the form of a translation project, with all the political and economic realities diverted away from the cultural plane. By positing a connection between China and Russia based on a shared identity as the oppressed and opposing this relationship to the imperialist bloc of Western Europe, Lu Xun implicitly enables China to accept and aspire to European modernity, worldliness, and progress on a *cultural* plane—without capitulating to the *imperialist* dimension of the West's sense of itself as civilizationally "superior."

The same sentiment was shared by left-wing filmmakers, who, like Lu Xun, perceived in literature and film an affinity between China and Soviet Russia, which allowed them to circumvent politics and to re-fashion the perceived affinity in an aesthetic sense—not because aesthetics was insulated from politics but because aesthetics was an ideological site that allowed another kind of politics to be manifested and represented. The affinity with Soviet Russia that Chinese writers and filmmakers fashioned was a cultural and aesthetic affinity, and the work of translation and of introducing Soviet films into China was an act of mapping that allowed them to construct and represent that affinity along cultural lines that ordered the world.

The cultural imagination of Soviet Russia as China's Asiatic brother took on real effects and social consequences especially after Sino-Soviet relations were re-established by the Guomindang government in 1932, as is evidenced by the burgeoning of translations of Soviet literature, promotion of Soviet films such as *Storm Over Asia*

(*Потомок Чингис-Хана*) (Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1928) and *The Road to Life* (*Путевка в жизнь*) (Nikolai Ekk, 1931), publications of theoretical discussions on Soviet montage and commentaries on Soviet film, and Chinese film adaptations of Russian and Soviet literature such as Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths* (adapted in 1947) and *The Watch* (adapted in 1949).

While some Soviet short films and newsreels were shown in Harbin in the 1920s, it was not until 1931 that Soviet feature film was screened for public viewing in Shanghai for the first time. *Battleship Potemkin* (*Броненосец "Потемкин"*) (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) was the first Soviet feature film screened in Shanghai in 1925. The semi-private screening was organized by the Soviet embassy as an invitation for the South China Society (*Nanguoshe*) in Shanghai.[8] *Storm Over Asia* (1928) was the first Soviet feature film screened for public viewing in China in 1931, followed by the public screening of *The Road to Life* (1931) in 1933. The public screening of *The Road to Life* was enthusiastically welcomed by many Chinese filmmakers, who wrote extensive commentaries and held a discussion session on the film.

The Road to Life is a film about a group of orphans taking part in the country's railroad construction. Set in Moscow in 1923, a group of orphans-turned-criminals were arrested by the police. The orphans were later assigned to the task of building railroads for the country. When the railroad was successfully completed, one of the most courageous workers was unfortunately murdered by the enemy. The film ends with the train running on the new railroad, transporting the corpses to the celebration venue.

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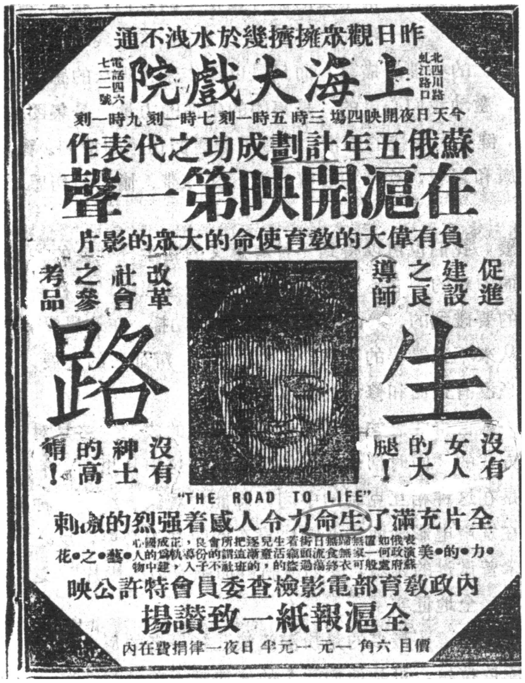
[8] The South China Society (*Nanguoshe*), which played a leading role in promoting dramatic performances and theories of acting in southern China, was established by the Chinese playwright Tian Han in 1925. Returning from Japan in 1921, Tian established the Creative Society together with Guo Moruo. In 1928, the South China Society was expanded to include literature, painting, music, drama, and film. Later, Tian joined The League of Chinese Left-Wing Dramatists.



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沒有紳士的高帽！

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Figure 2: The Chinese advertising poster of the Soviet film *The Road to Life* (*Shenglu*) (1931)

The advertising poster of *The Road to Life* gives us a few clues to the attraction and selling point of the Soviet film (Figure 2). The poster calls the film "a representative work of Soviet Russia's Five-Year Plan" and "a people's film with a heroic and pedagogical mission" (Huang Zibu 656). The middle of the poster features a child's smiling face, surrounded by four slogans in big fonts: "A kind teacher who encourages construction," "A reference for reforming society," "No lady thighs!" and "No gentleman top hats!" (Huang Zibu 656). The bottom of the poster says: "The film is filled with vitality of life (*shengmingli*), instilling intense excitement in us" (Huang Zibu 656). The advertising phrases on the Soviet film poster serve as a sharp contrast to Hollywood advertising phrases. The terms "pedagogical mission" (*jiaoyu shiming*), "teacher" (*daoshi*), and "reference" (*cankaopin*), juxtaposed against the absence of "lady thighs" (*nüren de datui*) and "gentleman top hats" (*shenshi de gaomao*), evoke the tensions between the "soft" and "hard" appeals of film, between education and entertainment, and between pleasure and pedagogy.[9] Xia Yan (with his pen name Huang Zibu), in his commentary on *The Road to Life*, describes how the film allows the audience to "experience a completely different air (*kongqi*)."

> We'd been spoiled by the sentimentalism and pornography of Euro-American film. In contrast, when first exposed to Soviet film, everybody would feel a completely different air (*kongqi*). Soviet film depicts neither intellect nor psychology (as in literature), but uses *gesture* [my emphasis] to move the audience and to convey the kinesthetic force (*li*) of human activity. What excite our soul are the force of the collective and the will of the collective. The new has replaced the old; healthy and direct emotions have replaced our depressing and desolate mood. Look—construction vs. destruction, vitality vs. deterioration, health vs. sickness, exaltation vs. lamentation, resolution vs. resignation, happiness vs. sorrow. How sharp are the contrasts! (Huang Zibu 655)

Xia Yan evokes "a completely different" and an indefinable "air" that is associated with Soviet cinema, thus echoing Tolstoy's fashioning of Russian air (русский дух) in *War and Peace*—an "air" that separates Russia from the cultural infiltration of Western

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[9] The "soft film vs. hard film debate" between 1933 and 1934 revolved around the tension between film as a form of education reinforcing leftist ideology and film as an entertainment (which itself is an ideology). Huang Jiamo, in an essay titled "Hard Film and Soft Film" published in *Xiandai Dianying* (1933), advocated the slogan "film is ice-cream for the eyes and sofa for the soul" against leftist ideology and revolutionary slogans. In retaliation, Xia Yan wrote a scathing criticism titled "The Cataracted 'Business Eyes'—who has destroyed the newborn cinema in China?" in *Chenbao* (1934) against the entertainment orientation of soft film theorists. For a more detailed discussion on the "soft film and hard film debate," see Zhang Zhen, 267-274.

Europe. For Xia Yan, the “air” that Soviet cinema exudes provides a refreshing and healthy alternative to the domination of Euro-American film. The sharp contrasts between Soviet film and Euro-American film (deterioration and decay vs. construction and vitality) that Xia Yan creates rhetorically reinforce the sense of hope and optimism the October Revolution provides. In Xia Yan’s eyes, the October Revolution is a landmark event in human history and is therefore a source of excitement and inspiration: “Fifteen years ago, the country that comprises one-sixth of the world’s land embarked on a change that human history had never experienced before” (Huang Zibu 654). Here, film commentaries function as a cultural rhetoric that fashioned a political, cultural, and aesthetic affinity with Soviet cinema.

The attraction of *The Road to Life*, Xia Yan points out, lies not only in its healthy content, but also in its form—gesture and montage that create a kinesthetic force of the collective. Xia Yan speaks of tactile gestures that “touch” (*jiechu*) the audience—gesture is a kind of emotional infection that affects spectators at the level of the senses (Huang Zibu 655). When Xia Yan speaks of gestures that convey the kinesthetic force (*li*) of human activity, he refers to montage that creates the kinesthetic movement and force of the collective. *Li*, which can be translated as “force,” “power,” “strength,” and “energy,” lies at the core of the film’s attraction. Like Xia Yan, Chen Liting speaks of the “beauty of force” (*li de mei*) in *The Road to Life* (667). Jin Yan, in a discussion with other Chinese film critics, describes the film as “simple but forceful” (*jiandan er youli*) (“Zhongguo dianying congyeyuan” 670). Shen Xiling says that “the power (*liliang*) of the film has enveloped my whole body and soul” (“Zhongguo dianying congyeyuan”

670). The beauty of force, as Cheng Bugao poignantly puts it, is intimately tied to the cinematic depiction of the collective: “What human beings possess is strength (*li*). The film mobilizes this strength and channels it to the path of creation and construction in a positive and logical manner. Using the power of the collective to build the career of the collective and to guide the life of the collective—this is truly a ‘road to life’” (*shenglu*) (“Zhongguo dianying congyeyuan” 670).

The highly acclaimed Soviet film *The Road to Life* is also metaphorically “a road to life” for Chinese cinema. Hong Shen and Zheng Boqi (with the pen name Xi Naifang), for instance, comment that “Soviet cinema not only gives Chinese audience a new and healthy entertainment, but also points to a right path for the Chinese film industry” (661). In a similar fashion, Zhang Shichuan notes that *The Road to Life* gives the Chinese film industry “a new model” (*dianxing*) (“Zhongguo dianying congyeyuan” 670). The “new type,” according to Zhang, is a cinema that carries a pedagogical mission: “Soviet cinema carries the important mission of educating the society. American film, in contrast, is nothing more than a ‘hypnosis’” (“Zhongguo dianying congyeyuan” 670). The pedagogical focus of Soviet cinema provided Chinese cinema an alternative to the “hypnotic pill” of Euro-American film and its system of representation—“individual hedonism,” “hero worship,” “champagne,” and “ladies” (Wang Qixun 658). While pedagogy was considered a high priority, it was by no means the only priority of Chinese cinema.[10] In a later essay, “On the Pedagogical Value of Soviet Film” (1948),

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[10] However, as I will argue in chapter two, the line between entertainment and education is not necessarily as clear-cut as the rhetoric in film discourse suggests. By the 1930s, left-wing Chinese filmmakers have mastered classical Hollywood narration, playfully adapting the dual plot of heterosexual romance and

Xia Yan construes pedagogy and pleasure as complementary benefits of his film-watching experience: “I’m being educated. I’m touched. Therefore, spiritually, I’m enjoying a real entertainment” (“Tan Sulian dianying” 203). Here, Xia Yan speaks of a cinematic attraction that is sensual, political, and pleasurable—an attraction that Chinese revolutionary cinema continued to strive to create during the Seventeen Years.

I have discussed the ways in which Soviet cinema was conceived as a kind teacher and a reference that would provide answers to the many questions confronting Chinese cinema during the Republican era: the tension between entertainment and education, and between pleasure and pedagogy, and the domination of Hollywood movies and its system of representation in semi-colonial China. The fashioning of an affinity with Soviet cinema was accompanied by not only public screenings of Soviet film, but also translations of Soviet works. For instance, Xia Yan pioneered the introduction of Soviet montage into China by translating Vsevolod Pudovkin’s *The Film Director and Film Material* (*Кинорежиссер и киноматериал*) (1926) in collaboration with Zheng Boqi in 1933 (see chapter three). Zheng Junli translated Constantin Stanislavski’s *An Actor Prepares* (*Yanyuan ziwo xiuyang*) (1936), which was interrupted by the Second World War and was not published in China until 1943 (see chapter four). In the next section, I turn to the work of translation (and more specifically Chinese translation of Soviet works) in the domain of film theory and criticism to shed light on the ways in which Chinese revolutionary cinema participated in the global circulation of ideas.

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work for pedagogical messaging and entertainment purposes in films such as *Queen of Sports* (*Tiyu huanghou*) (Sun Yu, 1934) (see also chapter two).

Creative (Mis)translation in Film Theory and Criticism

In his illuminative study, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*, Markus Nornes places translation at the center of cinema, whose history is "one of endless border struggles" (66). Echoing Lawrence Venuti's contestation of the invisibility of translation as a derivative and secondary activity, Nornes redefines translation as a form of authorship and scholarship in the domain of film theory and criticism.[11] By unraveling the competing translations of Paul Rotha's *Documentary Film* in Japanese, Nornes sheds light on translation's transformative power in the global circulation of ideas.

In current scholarship on Chinese cinema, little attention is paid to the translation, rewriting, circulation, and dissemination of Euro-American film theories in semi-colonial and communist China. This project seeks to fill an important gap in the global circulation of film theory by looking at how Soviet montage and Stanislavski's realist acting system were introduced into China through the work of translation. As Nornes puts it, "the global volume of translation is marked by inequity when broken down by language group" (66). The inaccessibility of film theories and criticisms that originate from areas not traditionally included in the canon (due to both language barrier and power inequality) results in a translation traffic that is unidirectional: from Euro-America to East Asia, rather than reciprocal. In recent years, the Permanent Seminar on the Histories of Film Theories has pioneered an initiative called the "Translation Project," which seeks to provide accessible English translations of writings on film theory that originate from areas not traditionally included in the canon of writings on cinema.[12] On the same trajectory, this project uncovers the ways in which Chinese translators and film critics entered a historical dialogue with other canonical texts and played off against one another, therefore acquiring cultural capital, introducing novelties in a culture, and displacing previous conventions and current competitors in the global cinematic arena.

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[11] See Venuti (1995, 1998).

When Nornes suggests that "the inability to access the original actually amplified the translation's transformative power," he refers to the ways in which linguistic distance from the original actually allows translators and film critics creative and interpretative space in making an intervention in the global circulation of ideas (69). Mistranslation or misprision, then, can be creative, productive, and transformative. Such is the case of the translation and reception of Soviet montage in China. Chapter three, "Translating 'Montage': The Discreet Attractions of Soviet Montage for Chinese Revolutionary Cinema" explores how the (mis)translation of the film term "montage" underwent various theoretical transmutations as the term was translated and introduced into China beginning in the early 1930s, as well as the resulting film practices as the term continued to be re-read, redefined, and reinvented during the communist era. As a result of the attraction to the revolutionary allure of Soviet montage in the 1930s, a mysterious aura was attached to the Chinese transliteration *mengtaiqi* (蒙太奇), which literally means "veil (is) too strange." In the 1950s and early 1960s, a period of intense engagement with international film theory, Chinese filmmakers demystified the inscrutability of montage associated with Soviet directors by taking the term in its broader sense of referring to *all* film editing methods, from Hollywood continuity editing to Soviet montage. Such a discursive move enabled Chinese revolutionary cinema to maneuver between the two cinematic modes without openly capitulating to the ideological enemies those systems might have signified politically. André Lefevere puts forward the important role of “refraction” in the dissemination of canon in the literary system: “A writer’s work gains exposure and achieves influence mainly through ‘misunderstanding and misconceptions,’ or, to use a more neutral term, refractions” (240). The same can be said of the dissemination of canon in the cinematic system. Translation, along with commentaries, criticisms, evaluation, and anthologies, “refracts” a canonical work produced in a given system into another cinematic system, giving it an afterlife in the target culture.

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[12] See <http://filmtheories.org>. Web. 29 May 2012.

Lefevere’s notion of “refraction” points to the contingency of the original and the various ways in which it is being claimed, used, revised, authorized, and refracted by translation. The inviolability of the “original” and the “canonical” often haunts translators: from Vladimir Nabokov’s painstaking translation of Alexander Pushkin’s *Evgeny Onegin* to Antoine Berman’s critique of translation as textual deformation, the “original,” the “foreign,” and the “canonical” acquire a monumental status that confronts translators. How is the problematic of the “original” and the “canonical” articulated in the translation of Soviet film and acting theories in communist China? Chapter four, “Engendering Socialist Glamour in Positive Heroines: Discourses on Screen Acting, Stanislavski’s System, and Revolutionary Realism” explores the afterlife of Stanislavski’s *An Actor Prepares* as a must-read manual for stage and screen actors alike in communist China. Based on Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood's 1936 English translation of Constantin Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* (published even earlier than the Russian original), Zheng Junli's 1942 Chinese translation is an indirect translation without an original. Zheng's pioneering translation and re-reading of theories of acting anticipated and enabled the creative maneuver between Soviet typage, the mixed use of professional and non-professional actors, and realist acting on the movie screen. Zheng's translation, though without an original, constitutes an intervention in the writing of film history and the canonization of film theory.

The invention of film in the last decade of the nineteenth century gave rise to multiple modernities in the twentieth century. As technology, in the words of Andrew Jones, "traveled roughly at the speed of the steamships that plied colonial trade routes" from the Western metropolis to the semi-colony of Shanghai, many Chinese filmmakers were preoccupied with the question of catching up with the West because of the perceived belatedness of China's modernization (11). One of the responses to that perceived belatedness was the struggle to create a national cinema in order to negotiate the presence of the foreign—often through translation and appropriation of other cinematic modes. By looking at how Chinese revolutionary cinema actively engaged with various film theories, aesthetic trends, and cinematic precedents in both theory and practice, my project interrogates the dissemination of the canon of film theory and the ways in which Chinese film history is intimately connected to what we know as film history today. Highly informed by international film theory, Chinese revolutionary cinema was not a passive recipient in the dissemination of film theory, but was an active participant in re-reading, redefining, and reinventing some of the major theoretical issues and film methods in international film discourse.

Mimesis and Realism

Chinese revolutionary cinema swiftly navigated between various discourses on realism both domestically and internationally. As an overall communist aesthetic, socialist realism struck a sympathetic chord with Chinese revolutionary cinema. The establishment of the PRC in 1949 led to the official elimination of Hollywood movies deemed "poisonous." Learning socialist realism (*shehui zhuyi xianshi zhuyi*), formulated by the "Soviet elder brother" (*Sulian laodage*) and officially endorsed by Zhou Enlai in 1953, became the official policy of "leaning to one side" (*yibiandao*). The search for a unique Chinese revolutionary aesthetics was later marked by Mao Zedong's 1958 formulation of "a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism," two years after Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization in 1956 that led to the re-evaluation and decline of Soviet socialist realism worldwide.[13]

It is imperative to look beyond the category of "socialist realism" as an overall communist aesthetic and a later sinicized form of "a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism" in order to account for the historical impulse and consistent gesturing towards realism and its various ideological permutations. This project provides critical insights on why and how realism as an aesthetic and an ideology was mobilized at critical junctures of the Seventeen Years.

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[13] Socialist realism was adopted as an official doctrine in the First Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934. According to Lorenz Bichler, the use of the term socialist realism in China can be divided into three phases: 1) from 1930s to 1953, socialist realism was considered as a strictly Soviet phenomenon. Mao Zedong used the term "proletarian realism" instead in his talks in Yan'an (31); 2) beginning in 1953, the term "socialist realism" was used in Chinese discourse as a Chinese phenomenon. Zhou Enlai, in the Second Congress of Representatives of Literary and Art Workers, said that "'the realism of socialism' was from now on to be the highest principle for all work in literature and the arts" (36); 3) after Mao Zedong's proclamation of the idea of "a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism" in 1958, the use of the term "socialist realism" was avoided in Chinese discourse (31). For more information on the historical relationship between the two slogans "socialist realism" and the "combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism," see Yang.

Realism, because of its claim to verisimilitude and resemblance to reality, evokes an ontological truth of the physical world, and can be conceived as a powerful political, ideological, and aesthetic vehicle in molding our perceptions of social reality. In *Mimesis,* Erich Auerbach's attentive close readings journey through the representation of reality in Western literature—from "Odysseus' Scar" to "The Enchanted Dulcinea" and to "The Brown Stocking." Realism, according to Auerbach, creates multiple consciousness and gives voices to the low in representing reality as human.

The invention of cinema and the indexicality of the cinematic image at the turn of the century added new complexities to the international discourse on realism. André Bazin, who developed a theory of neorealism and promoted it as a cinematic agenda, considered that "the general trend of cinema ha[d] been toward realism" (26). For Bazin, neorealism, born in Italy after World War II as a result of a hunger for reality, constitutes "a triumphant evolution of the language of cinema" (9). Capturing the human and giving voices to the low, for Bazin, are the key imperatives of neorealism. Bazin applauds the "extraordinary feeling of truth" and "minimum of theatrical pretense" of Italian neorealism (24). On-location shooting, the use of natural light, the preference for long and medium shots, the mixed use of professional and nonprofessional actors (Bazin calls it "amalgamation"), and the avoidance of complex post-production editing give Italian neorealism a sense of rawness, authenticity, and visual truth. Central to such a visual truth is the representation of humanity and its everyday environment with a certain “crudeness”—“a certain instant effectiveness of a realism which is satisfied just to present reality” (25). Bazin calls such a realism “revolutionary humanism” (21), in the sense that film was a means of “education and social progress” (10).

The rise of neorealism at this particular historical juncture (in postwar Italy) had a decisive impact on various national cinemas, including Chinese cinema, after World War II. Bazin sees the rise of neorealism as “a moment of particularly overt ideological conflict in cinema” (Shiel 6). According to Bazin, Italian neorealism and Hollywood cinema stood as opposite: “Italian neorealism embodies the idea of culture as critique,” whereas “Hollywood cinema presents itself as the epitome of entertainment, not necessarily mindless but not particularly political, compliant and not resistant, escapist and not engaged” (Shiel 6). Michael Denning makes the poignant observation that “there is a direct line between the pioneering cinematic alternatives to Hollywood (the Left-inspired Italian neo-realism) and the various Third Word cinemas” (quoted in Giovacchini and Sklar 11). In the case of the new Chinese socialist cinema after 1949, various realisms amalgamated in the early 1950s at a critical historical juncture: neorealism, the legacy of May Fourth social realism, and socialist realism as an overall communist aesthetic.

In “The Geography and History of Global Neorealism,” Saverio Giovacchini and Robert Sklar suggest that neorealism coincided with “national rebirth and national cinema,” precisely when neorealism “ceased to be Italian—or only Italian” (6). The international acclaim and reception of Italian neorealist films coincided with the birth of a new national cinema in China and provided a useful lesson for Chinese cinema. Italian neorealism’s crudeness and its focus on the lower social classes were ideologically and aesthetically pleasing to the Chinese audience. A 1954 issue of *The People’s Cinema* features *Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948) on its back cover and in an article titled “*Bicycle Thieves*.” The article welcomed *Bicycle Thieves* as a progressive film that exposes social inequality and the plight of the lower social classes. According to the article, the film however fails to provide a solution that goes beyond mere depiction of social problems in postwar Italy.

Unlike Italian neorealist films, the new Chinese socialist cinema provides narrative resolution with an optimistic and even utopian outlook. Although *Corrosion* (Zuo Lin, 1950), one of the earliest film adaptations of May Fourth literature, resembles *Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945) in the sense that both films feature spies as negative characters to further the polarization of good and evil, the melodramatic mode and narrative resolution in early PRC films deviate from Italian neorealism in creating a moral universe of victims and villains. Chapter two, “Rewriting the Canon: Adapting May Fourth Literature on Screen” turns to one of the most prominent genres during the early years of communist China—film adaptations of May Fourth literature. Unlike Italian neorealism’s “deprioritisation of narrative and literary sources,” which “signified a refusal of loyalty to the written word” that was seen to “restrict the potential for realism,” the new Chinese socialist cinema turned to the May Fourth literary tradition in order to strengthen the claim to revolutionary realism (Shiel, 12). Using the 1956 film adaptation of Lu Xun’s short story “The New Year’s Sacrifice”(1924) as a case study, chapter two highlights the permeability between cinema and literature and looks at how May Fourth social realism was re-engineered on screen to become revolutionary realism (*geming xianshi zhuyi*).

Although Chinese revolutionary cinema shared with neorealism a concern for the human, as reflected in the saying about *The White-Haired Girl* (Shui Hua & Wang Bin, 1950)—"The old society turned human into ghosts; the new society turns ghosts into human," Chinese revolutionary cinema, at least up until the early 1960s, strived to create extraordinary heroes and heroines whose devotion to the Party is exemplary. Chapter four "Engendering Socialist Glamour in Positive Heroines: Discourses on Screen Acting, Stanislavski's System, and Revolutionary Realism" teases out the various strands of acting in Chinese revolutionary cinema and account for Chinese actors' adoption of the realist methods of Russian theater director Constantin Stanislavski. I suggest that Chinese revolutionary cinema creatively capitalizes on both the anonymity of non-professional actors (the legacy of Soviet typage and Italian neorealism) and cinematic stardom that are necessary for the creation of socialist glamour in positive heroines. It is the cinematic creation of a glorified heroism that exceeds the demands of socialist realism and verges on the "combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism."

Chapter 1

Fashioning Socialist Internationalism:

Chinese Film Journals and Cinematic Exchange during the Seventeen Years

"The Soviet Union's Today is our Tomorrow;" "March on! Our brothers in Latin America and Africa"—rhetoric of socialist friendship, solidarity, and brotherhood abounds in Chinese film journals published during the Seventeen Years. In this chapter, I pay close attention to Chinese film journals and the politics of cinematic exchange. During the period, film journals were a lens through which Chinese revolutionary cinema looked out to the world and projected itself to the world. Through close readings of newspapers, advertisements, and film journals, this chapter explores a vibrant revolutionary film culture and the construction of socialist internationalism during the Seventeen Years.

In her study of patterns of film export from the People's Republic of China to socialist and non-socialist countries, as well as the circulation and dubbing of Soviet films in the PRC in the 1950s and 1960s, Tina Chen uses the term "socialist geographies" to refer to the ways in which film export and import, international film exhibitions, and traveling film technologies articulate visions of modernization and socialist internationalism as national and global projects ("Socialist Geographies" 73). By analyzing export and import patterns, audience figures, and filmic texts in relation to one another, Chen delineates the shifting temporal and spatial hierarchies within the socialist bloc and highlights the malleability of the term "internationalism" throughout the 1950s and 1960s as China increasingly appropriated the Soviet Union's role as a visionary leader of socialism in relation to Asian, African, and Latin American countries. The fashioning of socialist internationalism underwent three stages of development: (1) learning from the "Soviet elder brother" in accordance with the policy of "leaning to one side" in the early 1950s; (2) the envisioning of Afro-Asian-Latin-American brotherhood in the post-Bandung era and after the Sino-Soviet split in the mid-1950s; and (3) the promotion of Chinese cinema to the world.

While Tina Chen's notion of "socialist geographies" reconstructs the shifting geopolitical network within the socialist bloc, what is most compelling about Chen's methodology is the way in which she highlights Soviet film as a form of "cultural consumption" "embedded in the popular consciousness" and "integrated into a politicized everyday" ("Internationalism" 87, 96). This chapter complements Tina Chen's reading by turning to film journals as a form of cultural production and consumption. While film journals, including readers' comments, were heavily censored, the circulation and repetition of visual imageries and socialist rhetoric as a result of the production and consumption of film journals and films constitute a self-understanding and a socialist worldview that operate on a mass level. Similar to Tina Chen's efforts, I locate film journals—more specifically, the representation of international film festivals and cinematic exchange, as well as the advertisement of film and its technology—as a form of cultural production and consumption in a non-capitalist context that produced what Chen calls "alternative globally situated subjects" ("Internationalism" 83).

"The Soviet Union's Today is our Tomorrow":

From Dubbing and Subtitling to Translation and Collaboration

“The Soviet Union’s today is our tomorrow” (*Sulian de jintian, jiushi women de mingtian*)—Chinese film journals published in the early 1950s are filled with slogans that glorify brotherhood with the Soviet Union (Mei 3). Tina Chen construes temporal and familial metaphors (such as the “Soviet elder brother”) as indicative of the “complex web of temporalizations through which Chinese, Soviet, and international socialism acquired meaning” (“Internationalism” 108). Socialist internationalism is built on the premise that a socialist revolution on a national level acquires an international character and becomes “a link in the international chain” (Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution* 133).[14] That is to say, the success of socialism is contingent upon a global movement and struggle against imperialism and capitalism. Within such a framework, the Soviet Union, the birthplace of the October Revolution, was often conceived as the leader and pioneer of socialism in Chinese film discourse.

The early years of the PRC relied heavily on Soviet film expertise. From 1949-1957, China imported 1309 films (of which 662 were feature films). Of the imported films, almost two-thirds came from the Soviet Union (Tina Chen, “Internationalism” 85). The eventful year of 1953 witnessed the institution of the first Five-Year Plan, during which film theory, screenwriting, and the film production system were considered to be the three major targets of “film construction.” In the same year, socialist realism, officially endorsed by Zhou Yang as “the road of advance for Chinese literature,” became the banner under which the study of Soviet film theories and techniques took place (“Socialist realism” 87). A Chinese study group of twenty film artists and technicians spent a year in Moscow in 1953 learning about various practices in the Soviet film industry. In this section, I focus on locating the Soviet presence and its malleability in film journals in the early 1950s. I am particularly interested in looking at the visual and textual repertoire that journal rhetoric created as a result of the work of dubbing, subtitling, translation, and collaboration. The sustained effort to introduce Soviet film, film theory, and technological know-how into China was a way to fashion solidarity with the eastern European socialist bloc headed by the Soviet Union.

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[14] This is Leon Trotsky’s idea of permanent revolution: “A national revolution is not a self-contained whole; it is only a link in the international chain. The international revolution constitutes a permanent process . . .” (*Permanent Revolution* 133).

Dubbing and Subtitling

In the early years of the PRC, Soviet cinema was set up as China’s aesthetic model. Even prior to the establishment of new China, the Chinese director and actor Yuan Muzhi stayed in the Soviet Union, where he worked with the Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein from 1940 to 1946. Yuan’s stay in the Soviet Union pioneered a cultural diplomacy that aimed at learning from the “Soviet elder brother.” The early years of the PRC relied heavily on imported Soviet film technology and dubbing. As Tina Chen suggests, two forms of technology figured prominently in Sino-Soviet film exchange: “Technologies of translation,” which include dubbing and subtitling, and “technologies of distribution,” which include film projectors and other forms of film machinery (“Socialist Geographies” 80). The Soviet film *Alexander Matrosov* (*Yige putong de zhanshi/Putong yibing*) (Leonid Lukov, 1949) was the first Soviet film dubbed into Chinese in 1949. In 1950, the national film plan envisaged the dubbing of forty Soviet features to fill the ideological gap after the elimination of Hollywood movies from the

Chinese market (P. Clark 40). By the end of 1953, more than a hundred Soviet films, such as *How the Steel was Tempered* (Mark Semyonovich Donskoy, 1942), had been dubbed and subtitled (Bu 24).

Tina Chen suggests that dubbing was conceived as “the most advanced and efficient of available translation technologies,” and the use of state studios to dub imported Soviet films “marked a shift in China’s status as modern” (“Socialist Geographies” 81-82). In December 1953, a conference on dubbing and subtitling was held in Beijing for a week, marking the accomplishment of the work of dubbing since the establishment of the PRC. The conference received extensive coverage in the film journal *The People’s Cinema* (*Dazhong dianying*) and deserves our attention here. Among the thirty or so participants of the conference were directors, translators, and voice artists from Northeast Film Studio and Shanghai Film Studio. A slogan at the conference venue said: “Dubbing and subtitling are important tools for promoting communism” (Bu 24). At the conference, Cai Chusheng spoke of the significant impact of dubbing and subtitling on the “political and cultural lives” of the people and the nation (Bu 24). According to Cai, film art enables people to learn from the “advanced cultures” of the world (Bu 24). For Cai, the Soviet Union was the leader of the “advanced cultures.” In 1954, the national film plan envisaged the dubbing and subtitling of more than forty films (most of which were Soviet films), such as the Soviet biographical film *Belinsky (*Grigori Kozintsev, 1953) (Zhang Ji 21).[15] By 1957, 206 Soviet feature films, 59 long documentaries and science and education films, and 202 various short films—including 24 animation films, 39 short documentaries, 139 short science and education films, and other newsreels—had been dubbed and subtitled in Chinese (Cai, "Xiang shiyue geming" 6).

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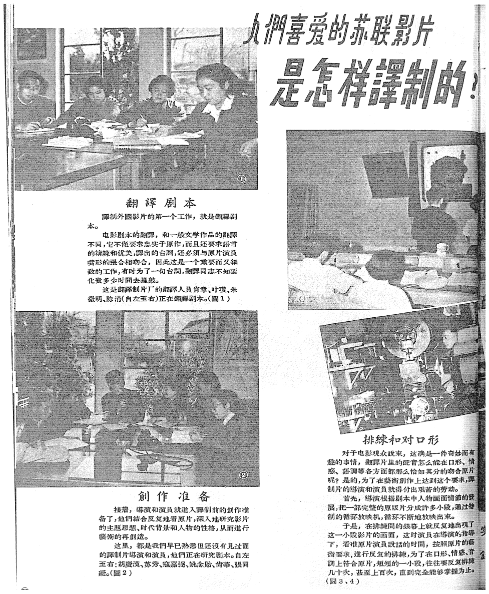
[15] A few films from Hungary, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Korea, Romania, Japan, and Italy (such as *Bicycle Thieves*) were also dubbed and subtitled in that year.

The perceived supremacy of dubbing over subtitling was attributed to the technologies of dubbing as well as the creative labor involved in the work of dubbing (Figure 3). An article titled "Hard and Creative Labor," published in *The People's Cinema* in 1954, introduced to readers the behind-the-scene work required for dubbing. Dubbing, according to the article, requires two major steps: (1) translation of screen script, and (2) lip synchronization (*dui kouxing*). Translators were required to maintain the length of the original dialogues. In addition, the translated script in Chinese had to match the foreign tongue and its lip movements. Otherwise, one would encounter "the weird situation where the mouth is shut on screen but the voice is still going, or the lips are moving but no voice is coming out" (Xinru 26). When it comes to a close-up, the article goes on, "one has to lip-synch (*dui kouxing*) word by word" (Xinru 26). Lip synchronization required voice actors to synchronize with the voice and emotions of the characters, while maintaining uniformity in pace of speech and lip movements so as to create the impression that "foreigners on screen can speak Chinese *naturally* [my emphasis]" (Xinru 26). Voice actors were also expected to prepare themselves for their roles by reading books about their characters or interviewing people in real life. In other words, dubbing was said to require more artistic cultivations on the part of voice artists. Moreover, dubbing was perceived to require a higher degree of technological sophistication than subtitling because of the need to render the work of translation invisible on screen through seamless synchronization. In that sense, dubbing was conceived to have the potential to overcome untranslatability in rendering the foreign immediately translatable and intelligible—like magic. Dubbing, therefore, *naturalized* the fashioned affinity with the “Soviet elder brother” on screen.



人們喜爱的苏联影片是怎样譯制的？

翻譯剧本

譯制外國影片的第一个工作，就是翻譯剧本。

电影剧本的翻譯，和一般文学作品的翻譯不同，它不但要求忠实于原作，而且还要求語言的精練和优美，譯出的台詞，还必須与原片演員嘴形的張合相吻合，因此这是一个重要而又細致的工作，有时为了一句台詞，翻譯同志不知要化費多少时間去推敲。

这是翻譯制片厂的翻譯人員肖章、叶琪、朱微明、陈涓（自左至右）正在翻譯剧本。（圖１）

創作准备

接着，導演和演員就進入譯制前的創作准备了，他們結合反复地看原片，深入地研究影片的主題思想、时代背景和人物的性格，从而進行藝術的再創造。

这里，都是我們早已熟悉但还没有見过面的譯制片導演和演員，他們正在研究剧本。自左至右：胡慶漢、苏秀、寇嘉弼、姚念貽、尙華、張同凝。（圖２）

排練和对口形

对于电影观众說來，这确是一件奇妙而有趣的事情，翻譯片里的配音怎么能在口形、情感、語調等各方面都那么恰如其分的吻合原片呢？是的，为了在藝術創作上达到这个要求，譯制片的導演和演員就得付出艰苦的劳动。

首先，導演根据剧本中人物画面情節的發展，把一部完整的原版片分成許多小段，通过特制的循环放映机，循环不断地放映出來。

于是，在排練間的銀幕上就反复地出現了这一小段影片的画面，这时演員在導演的指導下，看准原片演員說話的时間，按照原片的藝術要求，進行反复的排練，为了在口形、情感、音調上符合原片，短短的一小段，往往要反复排練几十次，甚至上百次，直到完全能够掌握为止。（圖３、４）

Figure 3: “How are our favorite Soviet films dubbed and subtitled?” Extensive illustrations and texts from *Shangying Pictorial* 4 (1957) introduced the behind-the-scene work involved in the dubbing and subtitling of Soviet films.

Soviet Film Weeks

In the 1950s, Soviet film weeks were held annually in China in November to celebrate the anniversary of the October Revolution. Soviet film weeks involved not only exhibitions of Soviet films that functioned as educational models, but also cinematic exchange through visits of film delegations. From 1952 to 1956, Soviet film weeks were held in China every year, and the Soviet Union sent its film delegations to China every year as well. For instance, in 1954, a Soviet film week was held in thirty Chinese cities. In the same year, China sent a film delegation that included Zhang Junxiang, Yuan

Wenshu, and the actresses Qin Yi and Zhang Ruifang to the Soviet Union. Three years later in 1957, *The New Year's Sacrifice* (*Zhufu*) (Sang Hu, 1956) was screened in the Soviet Union when China sent a film delegation constituted by Huang Zuolin, Sang Hu, and Bai Yang to the Soviet Union.

In a special article on the Soviet film week in 1954, titled "A Glorious Model," a writer extolled thus: "The Soviet Union's today is our tomorrow. We are marching forward on the same path that the Soviet people have traveled" (Mei 3). Soviet cinema was conceived as a "glorious model" (*guanghui de bangyang*) that pointed to a socialist future for China, whose film workers traveled to the land of their "Soviet elder brother" and cinematic precedent.

Metaphors of Friendship and Intimacy

The advertisement of Soviet film weeks in Chinese film journals was accompanied by colorful illustrations of exhibited films, pictures of Sino-Soviet friendship, and metaphors of intimacy. A 1957 issue of *Shangying Pictorial (Shangying huabao*) includes an extensive coverage of Soviet cinema to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution. In an article that gives a historical overview of Soviet film in China, a writer describes Soviet cinema as providing the "spiritual nutrients" (*jingshen yingyang*) for Chinese art (Yu 7). In another article, terms such as "intimate friendship" (*qinmi youyi*) and "ever-green friendship" (*youyi changchun*) are mobilized to describe the relationship with the Soviet Union (Zi 18-19).

The 1957 November and December combined issues of the film journal *Chinese Film* (*Zhongguo dianying*) is on the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution. In a letter to the Soviet Journal *Film Art*, the editorial boards of the Chinese film journals *Chinese Film* (*Zhonggguo dianying*) and *Translations of Film Art* (*Dianying yishu yicong*) describe Soviet cinema as "a pioneer of film art" that "defines a new direction for film art in the world" ("Sulian dianying" 3). In the special issue, a critic writes that "Soviet film will always shine on the Chinese screen" (Sha 83). Every Soviet film, according to the critic, is a "lively visual textbook" (Sha 83). In the same issue, in an article titled "Thanks, Soviet Film," Chen Bo writes: "The sun of the October Revolution rises from the East and shines brightly. We, under the shining and glorious sun, follow the path of the October Revolution" (111). In a different article, Cao Xin writes: "Soviet film is the most loyal friend and teacher who accompanies us as we march forward. The way it gives us spiritual support, which is transformed into physical strength, cannot be calculated in a mathematical manner" (114).

Metaphors of friendship and intimacy mobilized in Chinese film journals harken back to the fashioning of an "eastern" bond with Soviet Russia in the Republican era. Soviet cinema and its pedagogical value were conceived once again as a "teacher" and a "visual textbook" that provided a direction and a model for Chinese cinema. Interestingly, the October Revolution was associated with the sun that rises from the East, shedding light on a path for China to follow. The rhetoric of the "East" was evoked to articulate not only visions of modernization and the nation, but also visions of socialist internationalism headed by the Soviet Union. What is most striking about the aforementioned metaphors of friendship is its spiritual and intangible aspect: Soviet cinema was conceived as providing "spiritual nutrients" that could be transformed into physical and material strength, whose potential, power, and implications were beyond mathematical calculations. Such a rhetoric posits a spiritual, ideological, and even physical affinity that transcends language and its untranslatability. Commenting on Chinese acting style in 1959, the Soviet actress V. Raduiskaya goes so far as to say that "Chinese and Soviet performers share the same language. Our friends—young Chinese performers are very familiar with Stanislavski's system. We are both educated under realism; therefore the language barrier does not affect our mutual understanding" (4). Realism and Stanislavski's realist acting system were construed as a common language shared by the Soviet and Chinese people. In that sense, an affinity and mutual understanding with the Soviet Union were realized through screen acting and the corporeal body, which were conceived to be capable of overcoming the limits of language. The work of dubbing, as well as the adoption of Stanislavski's system, became the ways in which Soviet film and acting style were rendered translatable and intelligible to the Chinese "younger brothers."

Translation of Soviet Film Theories

Going one step further than dubbing and subtitling, Chinese filmmakers, critics, and translators continued the effort to introduce Soviet film theories into China after the Republican era. Translation, especially literary translation, is often conceived as a relationship between languages. Yet, little attention is paid to the intimate connection between cinema and translation in the study of Chinese cinema. Chinese cinema can be considered as a cinema born in and of translation, especially if we turn to the Republican era and look at the early influx of foreign film terminology translated from English into

Chinese, ranging from “movie” (*huodong yingpian*) to “dolly shot” (*tuila jingtou*) and the “close-up” (*texie*). One of the goals of this project is to historicize the translation of foreign film terms and film theories, as well as the resulting cinematic effects and consequences in Chinese film discourse. In chapter three and chapter four, I will look at more closely at how Soviet montage and Stanislavski’s system of acting were translated and introduced into China beginning in the early 1930s, as well as the resulting film practices as Soviet ideas and film terminology continued to be re-read, redefined, and reinvented during the Seventeen Years. Here, I would like to mention a few significant translations and anthologies published during the Seventeen Years, as well as the major film journal *Translations of Film Art*.

Anthologies

While translations of the seminal works of Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Constantin Stanislavski had begun during the Republican era, when filmmakers such as Xia Yan, Zheng Boqi, and Zheng Junli relied on existing translations in Japanese and English, it was during the Seventeen Years when professional translators embarked on direct translation from original Russian sources. It was also during the Seventeen Years when Soviet artists achieved canonical status in China. For instance, Pudovkin’s writings on montage were anthologized in a Chinese volume of Pudovkin’s selected writings published in 1962. Similarly, Eisenstein’s formulations of montage were translated into Chinese in *Dianying yishu sijiang* (*The Film Sense*) (1953) and anthologized in a volume of Eisenstein’s selected writings published in 1962. In 1963, the Chinese Film Press published the first four volumes of *The Collected Works of*

Stanislavski, which include *An Actor Prepares* (Parts I and II) and *Creating a Role*. During the Seventeen Years, theoretical discussions of Soviet film theories matured and reached a level of sophistication, as demonstrated in publications such as Ji Zhifeng's *A Brief Introduction to Montage Techniques* (1962), which is a user-manual of montage and film editing methods for Chinese filmmakers and audience alike. As I will demonstrate in chapter three, the translation and reinvention of Soviet montage by Chinese filmmakers point to the way in which Chinese revolutionary cinema actively participated in re-reading and redefining international film theories.

***Translations of Film Art* (*Dianying yishu yicong*)**

The monthly Chinese film journal *Translations of Film Art* played a pivotal role in translating Soviet film theories and criticism into Chinese until the discontinuation of the journal in 1958. While the journal introduces French and Japanese film criticism, its coverage focuses mostly on the Soviet Union. Up until 1956, the journal translated over fifty Soviet film scripts and over fifty Soviet theoretical works on film, including the major works of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Stanislavski. For instance, issues from 1955 to 1958 feature a column called "Learning Stanislavski's Acting System." The first issue (1958) of the Chinese film journal *International Film* (*Guoji dianying*), successor to the discontinued *Translations of Film Art*, features a collection of special essays on Eisenstein and Pudovkin to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the death of Eisenstein and the fifth anniversary of the death of Pudovkin.

Collaboration

In addition to the work of dubbing, subtitling, and translation, Chinese and Soviet filmmakers embarked on cinematic collaboration, the most exemplary of which is *Wind from the East* (*Feng cong dongfang lai*) (*В едином строю*) (Efim Dzigan and Gan Xuewei, 1959)—the first feature film co-produced by China and the Soviet Union. The film was made by Changchun Film Studio and Mosfilm. It was shot in 1957 and released in 1959 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the PRC. The Chinese title of the film, *Wind from the East*, mobilizes rhetoric of the "East" to convey the infallible friendship and collective strength of the Chinese and Soviet people (Figure 4).

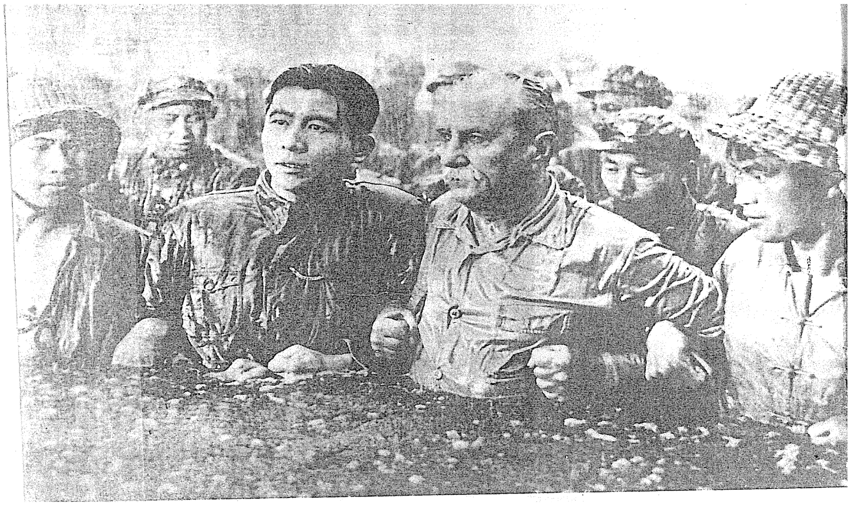


Figure 4: The Chinese film journal *Film Art* (*Dianying yishu*) (issue 1, 1961) highlighted this shot as a "touching" (*dongrende*) moment of solidarity in the Sino-Soviet co-production *Wind from the East* (1959).

Looking Outward:

An Overview of Chinese Film Journals from the Seventeen Years

The production and consumption of Chinese film journals satisfied a thirst for learning and engagement with foreign cinematic counterparts. Far from being xenophobic, Chinese film journals published during the Seventeen Years maintained a consistent effort to internationalize their coverage and to advertise Chinese film to the world. If, as mentioned before, Soviet films were “visual textbooks,” then film journals were textbooks with colorful illustrations, informing readers of behind-the-scene happenings, film terms, technological know-how, and film production goals. Filled with comics, advertisements, film commentaries, and pictures of socialist stars (both foreign and domestic), Chinese film journals from the Seventeen Years were entertaining to read. This section looks at how those journals oriented readers to “look outward,” keeping them up-to-date about film happenings all over world—not only in the socialist camp but also in the capitalist camp, especially after the Sino-Soviet split in the mid-1950s when China attempted to take on the role of a leader in the socialist world.

Chinese Film (*Zhongguo dianying*)

While *Translations of Film Art* introduced Soviet film theories and criticism in a rather specialized language targeted to a more sophisticated group of readers, the journal *Chinese Film* (*Zhongguo dianying*) introduced a diverse range of foreign film magazines and film happenings in a more user-friendly manner. A film journal started in 1956, *Chinese Film* introduced both domestic and foreign films (Figure 5). Almost every issue of the journal featured a one-page column that introduced a foreign film journal to Chinese readers. For instance, the December issue of *Chinese Film* in 1956 introduced the Polish film journal *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, which started in 1951. Issues in 1957 introduced the English film journal *Sight and Sound*, the French film journal *Cinema* (started in 1955), the German film journal *Deutsche Filmkunst* (started in 1953), the

Indian film journal *Filmfare* (started in 1952), the Italian film journals *Cinema Nuovo* (started in 1952) and *Unitalia Film* (published in Italian, French, English, German, and Spanish), the Czechoslovak journal *Czechoslovak Film* (published in Russian, German, English, French, and Spanish), and the Soviet film journal *Sovietskii Ekran* (started in 1957). Issues in 1958 introduced the Korean journal *Korean Film* (started in 1957) and the Vietnamese journal *Film* (started in 1957).

As my list indicates, *Chinese Film* introduced a diverse range of the most current foreign film journals from all over the world. A column writer, commenting on the Vietnamese film journal *Film*, highlighted the similar mission shared by the Vietnamese film journal and *Chinese Film*. The column writer complimented the way the Vietnamese film journal introduced the Chinese film *The New Year's Sacrifice* (1956), translated its film script, and most importantly introduced films from “brotherly nations” (*xiongdi guojia*) such as the Soviet Union and China (Xiao 81). An anonymous column writer, commenting on the English film journal *Sight and Sound*, disproved of the way the journal “separates art from economics” (“Yingguo” 64). Nonetheless, the column writer recognized the “practical usefulness” of such a film journal: “Although it tends towards an aestheticism that transcends class, it has its own practical usefulness” (“Yingguo” 64). The most important parts of *Sight and Sound,* according to the column writer, were essays that introduced film artists and film theories from the West. Those essays were grouped under four categories by the column writer: “The problem of film art, research on film history, essays on film artists, and film criticism” (“Yingguo” 64).

***International Film* (*Guoji dianying*)**

Foreign film journals served as references for Chinese film journals published during the Seventeen Years. By the mid-1950s, a sophisticated film discourse in dialogue with international film theory had developed in China. Film journals such as *Chinese Film* and *International Film* (successor to *Translations of Film Art*, which was discontinued in 1958) were highly informed and informative journals that covered topics ranging from theories on film art to film history and film criticism. *International Film* represented a major shift in content and organization compared to its precedent *Translations of Film Art* (Figure 6). The editorial of the first issue of *International Film* described *Translations of Film Art* as a journal that specialized in Soviet film theory and practice but "lacked research on Chinese film art" ("Fakanci" 1). The editor wrote that *Translations of Film Art* "uncritically introduced theories that were obviously flawed, resulting in negative effects on readers" ("Fakanci" 1). To overcome the weaknesses of its predecessor *Translations of Film Art, International Film*, as its title suggests, strived for a wider international coverage rather than exclusively focusing on Soviet film theories and criticism. While coverage of Soviet cinema was reduced in Chinese film journals in the late 1950s because of the Sino-Soviet split, Soviet revolutionary classics such as *Lenin in October* (Mikhail Romm, 1937) and *Lenin in 1918* (Mikhail Romm, 1939) nonetheless occupied a canonical position, not to mention the fact that Soviet influence operated tacitly throughout the Seventeen Years.[16]

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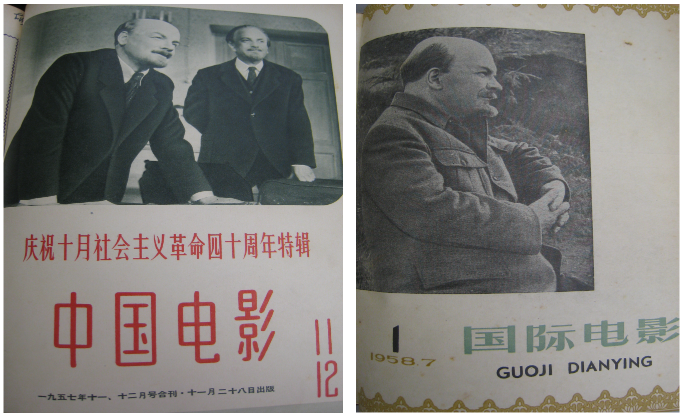
[16] Tina Chen (see "Internationalism") notes that the number of new Soviet films imported into China dropped dramatically after 1957, and those screened in the 1960s tended to be Stalinist classics rather than newly produced films.


庆祝十月社会主义革命四十周年特辑
中国电影
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一九五七年十一、十二月号合刊・十一月二十八日出版
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1958.7
国际电影
GUOJI DIANYING

Figure 5, 6: (Left) A combined special issue of *Chinese Film* published in 1957, celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution. (Right) An issue of *International Film*, published in 1958.

Redefining Red Friendship:

Post-Bandung Afro-Asian-Latin-American Solidarity

> We hear the groaning of the people,
> Their eyes shine with the spark of anti-imperialist struggle.
> March on! Our brothers in Latin American and Africa,
> We are gazing at your struggle for justice. (Sun 2)
> —"March On! Our Brothers in Latin America and Africa," Sun Daolin, Zhang Ruifang, and Qin Yi
>
> With red rose petals
> We crown our song of revolutionary friendship.
> Great oceans and high mountains set us far apart,
> But our two strong hands are tightly clasped together (Chien 2).
> —"Song of Red Friendship," from the film *Forward, Side by Side*, a Chinese-Albanian co-production

In previous sections, I look at the ways in which visual imageries and socialist rhetoric in film journals constructed visions of socialist internationalism headed by the Soviet

Union in the early 1950s. The mid-1950s witnessed the envisioning of Afro-Asian-Latin-American brotherhood in the post-Bandung era and after de-Stanlinization. Red friendship was redefined to turn the spotlight on Asian, African, and Latin American countries. The shift in cinematic alignment was partly a result of Cold War politics. After Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech in the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, which initiated de-Stalinization, the Soviet Union was no longer considered as a teacher free from ideological flaws and revisionism. Chinese revolutionary cinema turned its eyes to Asia, Africa, and Latin America to fashion a new socialist internationalism as a counterforce against the two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union. By doing so, Chinese revolutionary cinema implicitly fashioned an alternative mode of temporality and remapped world cinematic space, shifting its center of gravity from the "West" to the "East" and eventually to Asia, Africa, and Latin America—or what Robert J. C. Young calls the "Tricontinental," evoking the first conference of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin American in Havana in 1966 (4-5). In the following, I look at how the representation of film festivals and cinematic exchange, as well as the advertisement of film and its technology in Chinese film journals, reveals a new kind of cinematic alignment and a socialist internationalism that is much broader in scope than the previous "brotherhood" with the Soviet Union.

Asian Film Weeks and Afro-Asian Film Festivals

The politics of cinematic alignment and exchange were manifested in film weeks and film festivals, which often received extensive coverage in film journals. Film weeks and film festivals were important venues where foreign films were advertised and circulated in China, and where Chinese films were advertised and exhibited abroad. Chinese film delegations, comprised of directors, film stars, and cameramen, often attended film weeks and film festivals abroad, where prizes and honors were presented to winning directors and actors. As Tina Chen puts it, film exhibition was an opportunity to "exhibit the [Chinese] nation to the international community" ("International Film Circuits" 150). Beginning in the mid-1950s, Asian film weeks and Afro-Asian film festivals, in which China participated, were held in various cities. Participation in film weeks and film festivals was a kind of cultural diplomacy that facilitated cinematic exchange and, most importantly, showcased national film production to the region. In that sense, film weeks and film festivals were at once national, international, and socialist. In the following, I provide specific historical instances of film weeks and film festivals, which, although held off-screen, can be considered as cinematic events no less important than film production itself.

In 1957, an Asian film week was held in August in ten cities in China: Beijing, Tianjin, Shenyang, Changchun, Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Wuhan, Guangzhou, and Kunming. Participating countries included Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Mongolia, Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore. In the following year, the first Afro-Asian film festival was held in Cairo in August. The Afro-Asian film festival originated from the Asian film week in Beijing in 1957. Participating countries included China, India, Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Mongolia, Burma, Tunisia, Morocco, Thailand, Pakistan, Japan, and the Soviet Union. Libya, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Laos participated as guest countries.

One of the main activities of the Afro-Asian film festival was to preview films from various countries. Tina Chen sees film exhibition as a "practice" and a "social imaginary" ("International Film Circuits" 152). Participation in film weeks and film festivals as a regular practice fashioned a new solidarity between China and other Asian and African countries beyond the scope of socialist internationalism headed by the Soviet Union, and such a social imaginary was reinforced in various representations in film journals. For example, an article in *International Film* said that "[p]eople in Asia and Africa are marching ahead in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism" (Wang Yang 30). Participation in film festivals, according to the article, was an opportunity for participating countries to learn from the editing, performance, music, and photography of exhibited films.

The Third Afro-Asian film festival in Jakarta in April 1964 was an unusual festival that spurred anti-American sentiments. Participating countries of the festival included China, Korea, Lebanon, Japan, Vietnam, Mongolia, the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, Pakistan, West Africa, Tunisia, Somali, Congo, Uganda, India, Zambia, the Philippines, Iraq, Cuba, and Indonesia. Many countries—Zanzibar, Mali, Tunisia, and the Philippines—presented their films at such an international festival for the first time. The Chinese film *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzijun*) (Xie Jin, 1960) received a Bandung award at the festival.

After the festival on May 9, sixteen organizations in Jakarta initiated a campaign for a boycott of US films throughout Indonesia. The Chinese film journal *Film Art* (*Dianying yishu*) responded to the boycott eagerly in an article titled "Resolutely in

Support of Indonesian Struggle against American Film." The article described Hollywood movies as a tool of "cultural invasion" and "ideological infiltration" because Hollywood movies dominated as much as sixty percent of the market share in Indonesia; in contrast, only fifteen domestic films were produced annually in Indonesia ("Jianjue" 7) (Figure 7). An article titled "Revolution in the Afro-Asian Film World" from *China's Screen* described the nation-wide screening of Afro-Asian films and the boycott of American films in Indonesia as an "unprecedented revolutionary act" (Ssutu 7). The Afro-Asian film festival in Jakarta, according to the article, was a "festival of unity" that was "revolutionary," "progressive," and "healthy" (Ssutu 6). As the case in Jakarta demonstrates, the Afro-Asian film festival was not only a venue for cinematic showcase and exchange; it was also a highly political event that stirred revolutionary sentiments and called for collective action.

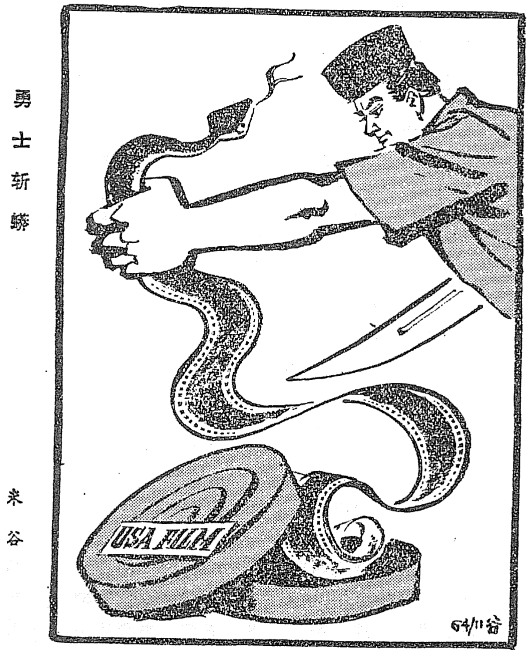


Figure 7: The illustration from *Film Art* (*Dianying yishu*) (issue 4, 1964) depicted US film as a poisonous snake that had to be obliterated.

In addition to Asian film week and Afro-Asian film festival, film weeks featuring films from specific countries in Asia and Latin America were held in China. In 1959, a Mexican Film Week was held in Beijing, Shanghai, and Wuhan. *Espaldas Mojadas* (1955) and *Hidden Paradise* (1962) were shown. 1960 was the “Year of Sino-Burmese Friendship,” when the Burmese Film Week was held. An article in *Film Art* described the friendship and cultural exchange between China and Burma as “family-like” and “the most ancient” (Shen Yanbing 20). Their friendship, according to the article, was “severed by imperialism” in the late nineteenth century but was “restored after liberation and independence” (Shen Yanbing 20). Familial and temporal metaphors were mobilized to fashion a long-lasting friendship.

In September 1964, a Vietnamese Film Week was held in Beijing, Guangdong, Shanghai, and three other Chinese cities to celebrate the nineteenth anniversary of the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Three feature films (*Kim Dong, What Smoke,* and *The Souvenir*) and three documentaries (*The Triumphant Decade*, *The Indomitable Buddhists of South Vietnam*, and *The Indomitable People of South Vietnam*) were shown. An article in *China’s Screen* described China and Vietnam as “neighbors” and “brothers,” whose relationship was as close as that of “the lips and teeth” (Han 2). Socialist brotherhood was no longer exclusively tied to the “Soviet elder brother,” but was extended to Burma and Vietnam with China at the forefront.

Collaboration and Joint Production with Albania

Apart from collaboration and joint production with the Soviet Union, Chinese revolutionary cinema turned its effort to collaborate with other countries in the post-

Bandung era. For instance, *Forward, Side by Side*, a full-length documentary, was the first joint Chinese-Albanian production. The documentary featured the "militant friendship" between China and Albania, showing the "common cause of building socialism" and "fighting imperialism and modern revisionism" (Chien 2). The "Song of Red Friendship," with the lyrics "great oceans and high mountains set us far apart, but our two strong hands are tightly clasped together," evoked the same visual imagery in the Sino-Soviet co-production *Wind from the East* (1959), except that China took on the role of an elder brother to Albania (Chien 2) (Figure 8). In addition to joint production, the Albanian feature film *Extraordinary Mission* (*Teshu renwu*) was released in Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, and other big cities to celebrate for the nineteenth anniversary of Albania's liberation.

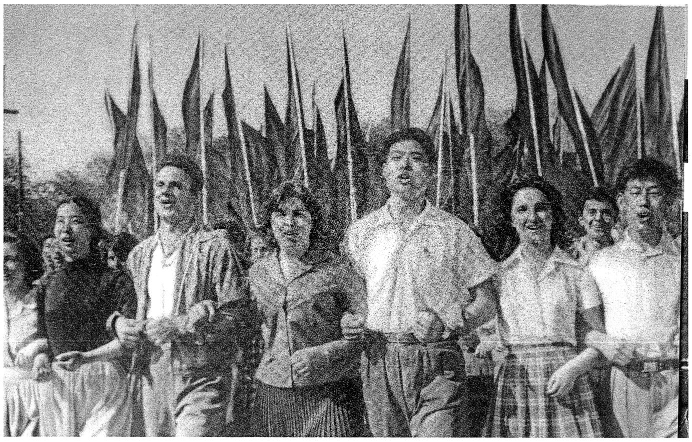


Figure 8: In the first joint Chinese-Albanian production *Forward, Side by Side*, the "Song of Red Friendship," with the lyrics "great oceans and high mountains set us far apart, but our two strong hands are tightly clasped together," evoked the same visual imagery in the Sino-Soviet co-production *Wind from the East* (1959), except that China took on the role of an elder brother to Albania (Chien 2).

Introducing Progressive Films: The Multi-language Film Journal *China's Screen*

China's Screen, a quarterly magazine published in Chinese, English, French, and Spanish, began to circulate in the 1960s. With the aim of internationalizing its audience and advertising Chinese film to the world, *China's Screen*, like foreign film journals such as *Unitalia Film* (published in Italian, French, English, German, and Spanish) and *Czechoslovak Film* (published in Russian, German, English, French, and Spanish), represented a major undertaking in promoting Chinese cinema to the world and in appropriating the Soviet Union's role in setting cinematic examples for the world (Figure 9).

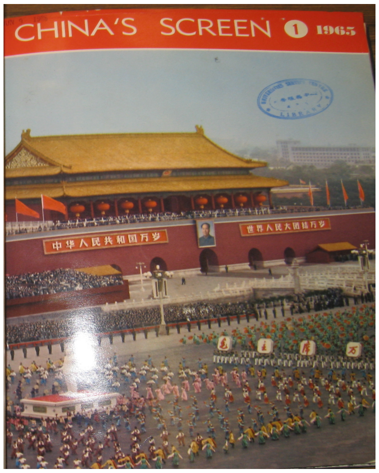


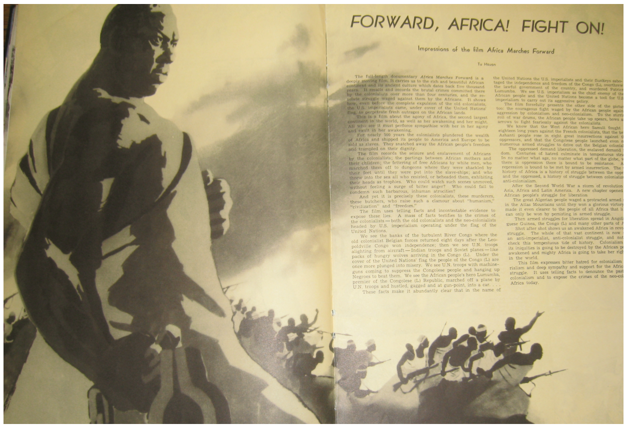
Figure 9: An issue of the multi-language film journal *China's Screen*.

Chinese revolutionary cinema redefined red friendship and created Afro-Asian-Latin-American solidarity in the post-Bandung era through *China's Screen*. With both a local and international readership in mind, *China's Screen* had extensive coverage and colorful illustrations of films from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In contrast to earlier film journals that had more coverage of Soviet cinema, *China's Screen* introduced almost exclusively domestic films and films from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In the following, I will demonstrate how *China's Screen*, like earlier film journals, oriented readers to look outward and re-created red friendship through eye-catching illustrations, mottos, and introductions.

In an article titled “Progressive Latin-American Films Popular in China,” various films from Cuba (*Stories of the Revolution*, *Realengo 18*, and *The Young Rebel*), Mexico (*The Right to be Born*, *Abandoned Women*, and *Juana the Valiant*), Argentina (*Behind a Long Wall* and *The Centre Forward Dies at Dawn*), Columbia (*The Miracle of Salt*), Venezuela (*Araya*), Bolivia (*The Waterfall*), and Chile (*Journey to Santiago*) were introduced to the Chinese audience. The films introduced were either dubbed into Chinese or released with subtitles. The article described those films as “reflecting the life and struggle of the Latin-American people,” and were well understood by Chinese people “who shared a similar fate in the past” (“Progressive” 18).

The article “The People of the Congo Will Certainly Win” introduced the documentary film *The People of the Congo Will Certainly Win*, which depicted the demonstration of the 650 million Chinese people “supporting the Leopoldville Congolese people’s struggle” and “condemning the crime of aggression committed against the Congo by US-Belgian imperialism” (Chih 6). Another article “Forward, Africa! Fight On!” mobilized a visually appealing illustration that filled the whole page. Combined with the provocative title, the article conveyed the message of the full-length documentary *Africa Marches Forward*: “An awakened and mighty Africa is going to take her rightful place in the world” (Tu 7) (Figure 10).

As the brief examples illustrate, socialist and non-socialist countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America were on the radar of socialist internationalism that Chinese revolutionary cinema promoted in the post-Bandung era. The Soviet Union, in contrast, was given little coverage in *China's Screen*. In the next section, I look at how *China's Screen* advertised and projected Chinese revolutionary cinema to the world.



FORWARD, AFRICA! FIGHT ON!

Impressions of the film *Africa Marches Forward*

Tu Hsuon

The full-length documentary *Africa Marches Forward* is a deeply moving film. It carries us to the rich and beautiful African continent and its ancient culture which dates back five thousand years. It recalls and records the brutal crimes committed there by the colonialists over more than four centuries, and the resolute struggle waged against them by the Africans. It shows how, even before the complete expulsion of the old colonialists, the U.S. imperialists came, under cover of the United Nations' flag, to perpetrate fresh outrages on the African lands.

This is a film about the agony of Africa, the second largest continent in the world, as well as her awakening and her might. All who see it must perforce sympathise with her in her agony and exult in her awakening.

For nearly 500 years the colonialists plundered the wealth of Africa and shipped its people to America and Europe to be sold as slaves. They snatched away the African people's freedom and trampled on their dignity.

The film records the seizure and enslavement of Africans by the colonialists; the partings between African mothers and their children; the fettering of free Africans by white men, who marched them off to dungeons where they were shackled by their feet until they were put into the slave-ships; and who threw into the sea all who resisted, or beheaded them, exhibiting their heads as trophies. Who could watch such scenes unmoved, without feeling a surge of bitter anger? Who could fail to condemn such barbarous, inhuman atrocities?

And yet it is precisely these colonialists, these murderers, these butchers, who raise such a clamour about "humanism," "civilization" and "freedom."

The film uses telling facts and incontestable evidence to expose these lies. A mass of facts testifies to the crimes of the colonialists — both the old colonialists and the neo-colonialists headed by U.S. imperialism operating under the flag of the United Nations.

We see the banks of the turbulent River Congo where the old colonialist Belgian forces returned eight days after the Leopoldville Congo won independence; then we see U.N. troops alighting from aircraft — Indian troops and Soviet planes — like packs of hungry wolves arriving in the Congo (L). Under the cover of the United Nations' flag the people of the Congo (L) are once more plunged into misery. We see U.N. troops with machine-guns coming to suppress the Congolese people and hanging up Negroes to beat them. We see the African people's hero Lumumba, premier of the Congolese (L) Republic, marched off a plane by U.N. troops and hustled, gagged and at gun-point, into a car. . . .

These facts make it abundantly clear that in the name of
the United Nations the U.S. imperialists and their flunkeys sabo-
taged the independence and freedom of the Congo (L), overthrew
the lawful government of the country, and murdered Patrice
Lumumba. We see U.S. imperialism as the chief enemy of the
African people and the United Nations become a tool for U.S
imperialism to carry out its aggressive policy.
The film forcefully presents the other side of the pictur
too: the courageous fight waged by the African people agai
aggression by colonialism and neo-colonialism. To the stirri
roll of war drums, the African people take up spears, bows a
arrows to fight fearlessly against the colonialists.
We know that the West African hero Samuli fought
eighteen long years against the French colonialists, that the br
Ashanti people rose in eight great insurrections against t
oppressors, and that the Congolese people launched even m
numerous armed struggles to drive out the Belgian colonial
The oppressed demand liberation, the enslaved demand
dom. Centuries of hatred culminate in tempestuous stru
In no matter what age, no matter what part of the globe, w
there is oppression there is bound to be resistance. A
repression is bound to be met by armed insurrection. The
history of Africa is a history of struggle between the oppr
and the oppressed, a history of struggle between colonialis
anti-colonialism.
After the Second World War a storm of revolution
Asia, Africa and Latin America. A new chapter opened
African people's struggle for liberation
The great Algerian people waged a protracted armed
in the Atlas Mountains until they won a glorious victory
made it even clearer to the people of all Africa that li
can only be won by persisting in armed struggle.
Then armed struggles for liberation spread in Angol
guese Guinea, the Congo (L) and many other parts of A
Shot after shot shows us an awakened Africa in revo
struggle. The whole of that vast continent is now
an anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist struggle, and not
check this tempestuous tide of history. Colonialism
its iniquities is going to be destroyed by the African pe
awakened and mighty Africa is going to take her righ
in the world.
This film expresses bitter hatred for colonialism
rialism and deep sympathy and support for the Afric
struggle. It uses telling facts to denounce the past
colonialism and to expose the crimes of the neo-col
Africa today.

Figure 10: "Forward, Africa! Fight On!"

The East is Red:

Advertising Chinese Revolutionary Cinema to the World

In addition to introducing films from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, *China's Screen* advertised domestic film to the world—which explains why the magazine was published in Chinese, English, French, and Spanish. Echoing earlier film journals such as *Shangying Pictorial* (*Shangying huabao*), which declared "Chinese film reaches the world," *China's Screen*, with an international readership in mind, proudly presented China's film industry to a foreign audience with colorful illustrations and detailed introductions ("Zhongguo dianying bianji" 21). The article "Some Facts about New China's Film Industry," written by Chen Huangmei, emphasized that China was "self-sufficient with regard to film apparatus and equipment, while exporting some products" ("Some Facts" 3). The exchange of films, Chen Huangmei went on, improved "mutual understanding between peoples of the world" and forged "solidarity and friendship among the peoples" ("Some Facts" 3). Here, self-sufficiency, which laid the basis of film export, was conceived as a major accomplishment, for China no longer relied on Soviet assistance and imports, and took on a leadership role in exporting its films and forging a new solidarity with countries that had the potential to become socialist.

China's Screen reinforced China's self-image as a pioneer, whose footprints reached the far corners of the world. For instance, an article titled "A Militant, Many Splendored Friendship" featured Premier Zhou Enlai's visit in Albania and ten other countries of "awakened, militant, and advancing Africa"—the United Arab Republic, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mali, Ghana, Guinea, the Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia, as well as Burma, Pakistan, and Ceylon from December 1963 to March 1964 (Li Teh-chuan 2). The article graphically mapped out Premier Zhou's tour that "spanned a distance of 108,000 *li* in three continents" (Li Teh-chuan 2). The tour, the article described, "forged a bond of unity among comrades and friends" and "drew a glittering arc of militant friendship between the revolutionary peoples" (Li Teh-chuan 2). Interestingly, the "glittering arc" of friendship received its light from China as the sun of revolution, whose rays reached the three continents, awakening the people of Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. The sun of revolution no longer resided in the Soviet Union. It rose from China as the leader of the East and shone over the far corners of the world.

Produced by the Central Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio, the documentary films *Premier Zhou Enlai Visits Albania*, *Premier Zhou Visits Northern Africa*, *Premier Zhou Visits Western Africa*, and *Premier Zhou Visits Northeast Africa* recorded Premier Zhou's tour. The documentary films were advertised in the aforementioned article, along with the tour map and Premier Zhou's words: "Our revolutionary sentiments burn together" (Li Teh-chuan 3). The article featuring Premier Zhou's tour, the tour map, and the documentary films formed a network of representation that revealed the worldliness of Chinese revolutionary cinema (Figure 11).

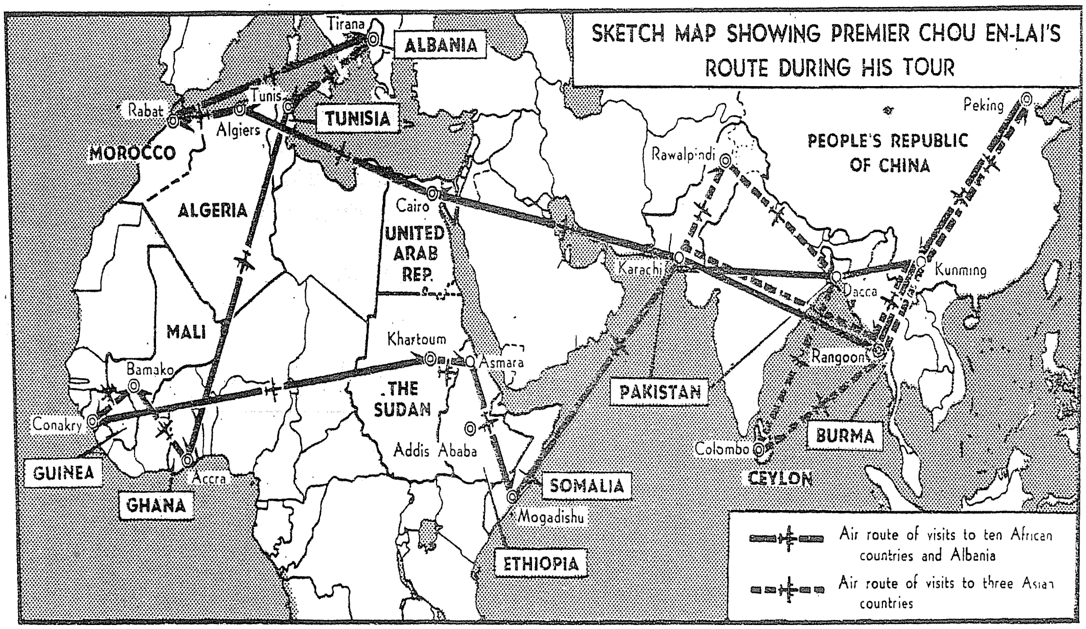
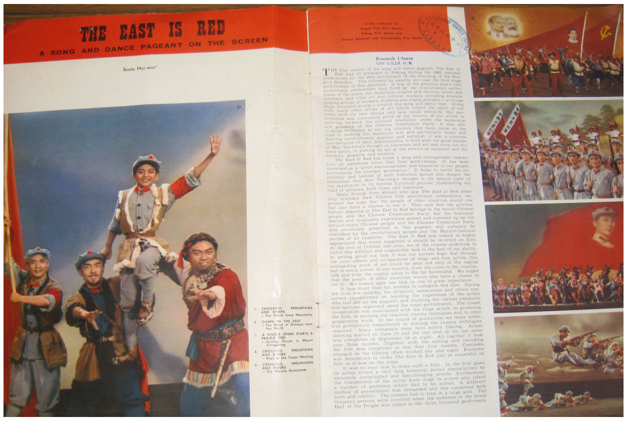

SKETCH MAP SHOWING PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI'S ROUTE DURING HIS TOUR
Tirana
ALBANIA
Tunis
TUNISIA
Rabat
Algiers
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
Cairo
UNITED ARAB REP.
MALI
Bamako
Conakry
GUINEA
GHANA
Accra
Khartoum
Asmara
THE SUDAN
Addis Ababa
SOMALIA
Mogadishu
ETHIOPIA
Rawalpindi
Karachi
PAKISTAN
Peking
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
Kunming
Dacca
Rangoon
BURMA
Colombo
CEYLON
Air route of visits to ten African countries and Albania
Air route of visits to three Asian countries

Figure 11: An illustrated map of Premier Zhou Enlai's visit in Albania and ten other countries of Africa. Such a map constructed a "glittering arc" of friendship.

Interestingly, the article emphasized the "age-old friendship" between China and other Asian and African countries, echoing earlier efforts to glorify the "most ancient" friendship with Burma (Li Teh-chuan 4). The "age-old friendship" between China and many African countries, according to the article, though severed by imperialism, was "restored" after liberation and independence: "Since China and many African countries regained their independence, all kinds of obstacles have been brushed aside and our age-old friendship has begun to shine with new luster" (Li Teh-chuan 3). According to the article, the same goes for Burma, Pakistan, and Ceylon, which all had "long-standing ties of friendship" with China: "Our common lot as victims of imperialist aggression and oppression and our common task of fighting imperialism unite us and have added kinship to our age-old friendship" (Li Teh-chuan 4). Here, a shared past was constructed to situate China and its brotherly nations along the same line of struggle and liberation.

To further fashion China as a leader whose footprints and light reach the far corners of the world, *China's Screen* advertised documentaries shot in African countries. For instance, the documentary film *Visit to Uganda* was advertised in *China's Screen* to show how since independence, the people of Uganda "have overcome all manner of difficulties in their efforts to build their country" ("Visit to Uganda" 9). An article titled "Chinese Cameramen in Africa" introduced the following documentary films shot in African countries: *An Ode to the Nile, The Horn of Africa, Independent Mali, The People of the Congo Will Certainly Win*, and *Resolute Algeria*. Tina Chen suggests that the production of "knowledge-based" films "points to an increased independence and self-confidence within the PRC by 1956" ("International Film Circuits" 156). Documentaries shot in African countries provided knowledge about brotherly nations, while simultaneously demonstrating the international reach of China's film technology, thereby establishing China as "an alternative center of knowledge" (Tina Chen, "International Film Circuits" 156).

Apart from documentaries, *China's Screen* advertised domestic feature films such as *The White-Haired Girl* (*Baimaonü*) (Shui Hua and Wang Bin, 1950) and *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960) to an international audience. The advertisement of the song and dance pageant, *The East is Red* (*Dongfanghong*), was given extensive coverage in *China's Screen* (Figure 12). As its title suggests, *The East is Red* is a proclamation of the glory of revolution (and of Mao Zedong) in China, fashioned as the leader of the East. An article titled "The East is Red: A Song and Dance Pageant" described the performance as "revolutionary," "national," and "popular" ("The East is Red" 12). In songs and dances, *The East is Red* tells the history of the Chinese revolution as well as the ensuing socialist construction. The performance was recorded on film in 1965 and advertised in another issue of *China's Screen*. The extensive coverage of *The East is Red* pointed to the culmination of China's self-image as the leader of the East in a celebratory manner. Here, the "East" as a long-standing historical sentiment (as discussed in the Introduction) was evoked as the locus of national pride and socialist solidarity.



THE EAST IS RED

A SONG AND DANCE PAGEANT ON THE SCREEN

Ssutu Hui-min*

Jointly produced by
August First Film Studio,
Peking Film Studio and
Central Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio

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THE film version of the song and dance pageant, *The East Is Red*, had its premiere in Peking during the 1965 national celebrations for the 16th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic. This followed by exactly one year the first stage performance of that spectacle. It was at the previous year's 15th anniversary celebrations that, fired by the revolutionary enthusiasm of the times, our musicians, singers and dancers, actors and actresses, and other art and cultural workers including amateur singing groups of workers, students and young pioneers — a troupe three thousand strong — created this song and dance epic. Along with many other works of art which reflect the spirit of our times with its new heroes and new social morality, this performance was convincing proof of the success of our artists in carrying forward the cultural revolution under the leadership and guidance of the Chinese Communist Party. It was also striking testimony to the big advance they have made on the road to making the theatrical arts and particularly music and dancing revolutionary, popular and national; it was a concrete manifestation of their determination to hold aloft the great banner of Mao Tse-tung's thought in literature and art and carry out the basic policy of putting all art at the service of socialism and the workers, peasants and soldiers.

The East Is Red has made a deep and unforgettable impression on audiences since that first performance. It has been described as a "great encouragement and education to our people, particularly the younger generation." It helps to instill the experience and lessons of each historical period and deepen the realisation that Mao Tse-tung's thought is the beacon light of our revolution in its various historical periods, illuminating our road of advance, both today and tomorrow.

Many friends from abroad who saw *The East Is Red* when they attended New China's 15th anniversary celebrations, expressed the hope that the people of other countries would one day also have a chance to see it. They said that the glorious history depicted in *The East Is Red* belongs to the heroic Chinese people and the Chinese Communist Party, but the historical lessons and invaluable experience gained and summed up by the revolutionary Chinese people and the Chinese Communist Party and artistically presented in this pageant will certainly be cherished by the revolutionary people and the Marxist-Leninist parties of all countries. *The East Is Red* was indeed so highly appreciated that many suggested it should be recorded on film. At the end of October last year, we of the cinema undertook to fulfill this difficult and responsible task to the best of our ability. In setting about our task it was our earnest hope that through the joint efforts and co-operation of stage and film artists, this outstanding work of art could be seen not only in the capital but in every corner of our country, from the cities to the countryside and from the coastal areas to the far hinterland. We hoped that the people of other countries would also have a chance to see it. We looked upon our task as one of great importance.

It took more than ten months to complete this film. During the first few months, the directors, cameramen and others concerned concentrated on learning the experience of the artists who had put on the pageant, and studying the various comments and opinions expressed about the stage performance. The closest co-operation was maintained with the stage artists, in producing the film, in devising the required cinema techniques and in other preparatory work. In the course of production we made extensive preliminary experiments to develop the cinema techniques required. Many rehearsals were held before filming. Actual shooting started on June 10 and the last shot of the last scene was completed on September 16 at night. All together it took over three months. Together with the cutting and recording the film was completed in less than four months. Comrades engaged on the filming often worked day and night. Everyone was determined to make *The East Is Red* just as successful on film as it was on the stage.

It was no easy task to make such a film. In the first place its action covers a very long historical period characterized by extremely complicated and fast-changing events. Furthermore, the transference of the action from stage to screen also raised a number of problems which had to be solved. A different method of presentation was demanded and this concerned both form and content. The camera had to take in a large area. Ten thousand persons were involved when the audience in the Great Hall of the People was added to the three thousand performers.

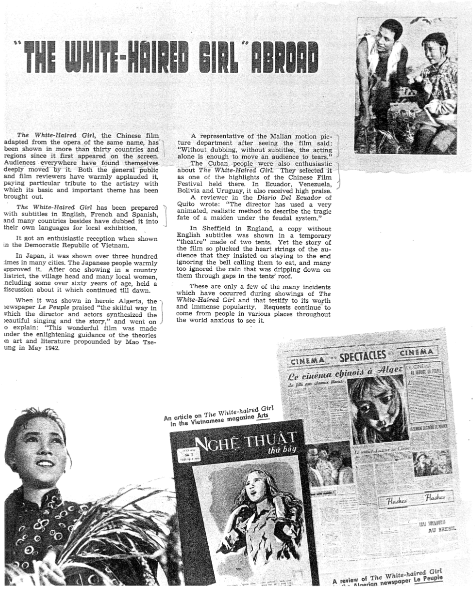
1. CROSSING MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS – The Great Snow Mountains
2. DAWN IN THE EAST – The Wind of October from the North
3. A SINGLE SPARK STARTS A PRAIRIE FIRE – Joining Forces in Mount Chingkang
4. CROSSING MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS – Rays of the Tsunyi Meeting
5. CROSSING MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS – The Marshy Grasslands

Figure 12: Extensive illustrations and descriptions of *The East is Red* in *China's Screen*

Portraying the Success of Chinese Film Abroad

In addition to introducing domestic and international film, *China's Screen* featured international reactions to highly acclaimed Chinese films produced during the Seventeen Years. Featuring the success of Chinese revolutionary cinema in the eyes of others was a way to project China's self-image and socialist worldview to local and international readers alike. An article titled "*The White-Haired Girl* Abroad" celebrated the success of

The White-Haired Girl (*Baimaonü*) (1950), which was subtitled in English, French, and Spanish and shown in more than thirty countries. According to the article, the Algerian newspaper, *Le Peuple*, praised “the skillful way in which the director and actors synthesized the beautiful singing and the story” (“*The White-Haired Girl*” 19). Quoting *Le Peuple*, *China’s Screen* wrote: “This wonderful film was made under the enlightening guidance of the theories on art and literature propounded by Mao Tse-tung in May 1942” (“*The White Haired Girl*” 19). It was reported that a representative of the Malian motion picture department, after seeing the film, said: “Without dubbing, without subtitles, the acting alone is enough to move an audience to tears” (“*The White Haired Girl*” 19). Here, music and corporeality of acting were said to have overcome the limits of language and untranslatability, and reinforced a sense of mutual understanding between the Chinese and Algerian audience. Moreover, the inclusion of illustrations from Algerian and Vietnamese newspapers gave the article a sense of “truth” in reporting the success of *The White-Haired Girl* abroad (Figure 13).



“THE WHITE-HAIRED GIRL” ABROAD

The White-Haired Girl, the Chinese film adapted from the opera of the same name, has been shown in more than thirty countries and regions since it first appeared on the screen. Audiences everywhere have found themselves deeply moved by it. Both the general public and film reviewers have warmly applauded it, paying particular tribute to the artistry with which its basic and important theme has been brought out.

The White-Haired Girl has been prepared with subtitles in English, French and Spanish, and many countries besides have dubbed it into their own languages for local exhibition.

It got an enthusiastic reception when shown in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

In Japan, it was shown over three hundred times in many cities. The Japanese people warmly approved it. After one showing in a country district, the village head and many local women, including some over sixty years of age, held a discussion about it which continued till dawn.

When it was shown in heroic Algeria, the newspaper *Le Peuple* praised “the skilful way in which the director and actors synthesized the beautiful singing and the story,” and went on to explain: “This wonderful film was made under the enlightening guidance of the theories on art and literature propounded by Mao Tse-tung in May 1942.

A representative of the Malian motion picture department after seeing the film said: “Without dubbing, without subtitles, the acting alone is enough to move an audience to tears.”

The Cuban people were also enthusiastic about *The White-Haired Girl*. They selected it as one of the highlights of the Chinese Film Festival held there. In Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia and Uruguay, it also received high praise.

A reviewer in the *Diario Del Ecuador* of Quito wrote: “The director has used a very animated, realistic method to describe the tragic fate of a maiden under the feudal system.”

In Sheffield in England, a copy without English subtitles was shown in a temporary “theatre” made of two tents. Yet the story of the film so plucked the heart strings of the audience that they insisted on staying to the end ignoring the bell calling them to eat, and many too ignored the rain that was dripping down on them through gaps in the tents’ roof.

These are only a few of the many incidents which have occurred during showings of *The White-Haired Girl* and that testify to its worth and immense popularity. Requests continue to come from people in various places throughout the world anxious to see it.

An article on The White-haired Girl in the Vietnamese magazine Arts
NGHỆ THUẬT thứ bảy
Số 3
CINEMA SPECTACLES CINEMA
Le cinéma chinois à Alger
La fille aux cheveux blancs
Flashes Flashes
AU BRESIL
A review of The White-haired Girl
Algerian newspaper Le Peuple

Figure 13: Reporting the success of *The White Haired Girl* abroad.

Another article titled "A Most Outstanding Film: Reactions of Viewers Abroad to *Five Golden Flowers*" described *Five Golden Flowers* (*Wuduo jinhua*) (Wang Jiayi, 1959) as a "refreshing change" and highlighted how foreign audience "remarked on the pure [and] serious love shown in the film, so different from the love interest and perverse [and] decadent emphasis on sex found in many Western films" ("A Most Outstanding Film" 19). The contrast with romance in "Western films" was emphasized to underscore the radical difference and "refreshing change" that *Five Golden Flowers* provided, while little words were said about the way the film creatively and strategically appropriated classical Hollywood narration and its dual plot of romance and work. *Five Golden Flowers*, a romantic comedy in an exotic ethnic setting, was fashioned by *China's Screen* as an alternative entertainment (romance and pure love without a decadent emphasis on sex) as well as an ideological form (ethnic harmony under the guidance of the Han elder brother), whose popularity among a foreign audience demonstrated that Chinese revolutionary cinema was more attractive than "Western films" (reminding us of *Newsweek*'s description of *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* as a "Chinese *Romeo and Juliet*"). "Some foreign friends," the article continued, described the film music in the following way: "The music is surely from heaven. How rarely is it heard in the world of men!" ("A Most Outstanding Film" 19). Like the portrayed success of *The White-Haired Girl*, the popularity of *Five Golden Flowers* was partly attributed to its music that appealed to an international audience. *Five Golden Flowers* received a warm welcome at the Chinese Film Festival in Tunis, at the That Luang Fair in Laos, and in the Sudan. The film was awarded the prize for best actress (Yang Likun) and best director (Wang Jiayi) in the second Afro-Asian Film Festival in Cairo in 1960. *China's Screen* reportage on foreign commentaries and honors at international film festivals brought to home and to the world the message that Chinese revolutionary cinema had reached the world with self-confidence and self-sufficiency.

Conclusion

I have looked at the malleability of visions of "socialist internationalism" and the way they were evoked in film journals throughout the Seventeen Years—from socialist internationalism headed by the "Soviet elder brother" to the redefinition of red friendship to include Afro-Asian-Latin American countries headed by China. The work of dubbing, subtitling, and translation, as well as the circulation of films in film weeks and film festivals, delineates the geopolitical and aesthetic networks that configured socialist internationalism. In addition, I have looked at how Chinese film journals oriented readers to look out to the world (through the introduction of foreign films) and projected China's self-image and socialist worldview to the world (through advertisement and self-presentation of Chinese cinema). In particular, visual imageries and metaphors of friendship mobilized in film journals help us to locate the affective investments in modernization and in the nation-building project, which culminated in the celebratory declaration that "the East is Red." In the next chapter, I turn to close readings of a prominent film genre in the early development of Chinese revolutionary cinema—film adaptations of May Fourth literature—in order to locate pleasure and the cinematic transformation of May Fourth literary traditions.

Chapter 2

Rewriting the Canon: Adapting May Fourth Literature on Screen

In this chapter, I turn to one of the most prominent genres during the early years of communist China—film adaptations of May Fourth literature. Adapting May Fourth literature on screen served two purposes. First, May Fourth literature provided Chinese revolutionary cinema with ideas and plots for screenwriting. The 1950 film adaptations of Lao She's novella *This Life of Mine* (1937) and Mao Dun's novel *Corrosion* (1941) are typical of the genre in its early development, characterized by the prominence of script and dialogue. Second, since May Fourth literature provided raw materials for creating revolutionary prototypes that were readily reproducible, adapting May Fourth literature on screen served the purpose of establishing and rewriting the canon for the ideological needs of the Party. Similar to the effort of the Soviet regime in establishing Maxim Gorky as the father of socialist realism through the film adaptation *The Gorky Trilogy: My Childhood, My Apprenticeship, and My University* (1938-1939) (which was widely-advertised and well-received in China in 1950), the Chinese communist regime fashioned Lu Xun as the father of modern Chinese literature and revolutionary realism by adapting Lu Xun's short story "The New Year's Sacrifice" (1924) on screen.

This chapter highlights the permeability between cinema and literature and looks at how May Fourth critical realism was re-engineered on screen to become revolutionary realism (*geming xianshi zhuyi*). In *The World Republic of Letters*, Pascale Casanova suggests that realism is often conceived as an instrument of political power or a critical tool: “Conceived as the ultimate point of coincidence between fiction and reality, realism, more than any other doctrine, lends itself to political interests and purposes” (197). Realism as an aesthetic experiment, an evaluative process, and a paradigmatic mode of storytelling is historically contingent from the May Fourth era to Mao Zedong’s era. In addition to a series of brief analyses of film adaptations of May Fourth literature in early communist China, this chapter uses the 1956 film adaptation of Lu Xun’s “The New Year’s Sacrifice” (1924) as a case study to illustrate the transformation from May Fourth realism to revolutionary realism.

I argue that film adaptations of May Fourth literature take on an entirely new entertainment and pedagogical value through (1) the appropriation of classical Hollywood narration; (2) the enticement of heterosexual romance; and (3) the creation of melodramatic moments that accentuate class conflicts and stir spectators into pathos in a moral universe of victims and villains that is typical of revolutionary realism.

Rethinking Screenwriting:

Chinese Literary Conventions Recoded into Classical Hollywood Narration

Adaptations of May Fourth literature is one of the most prominent film genres in the early years of communist China, for May Fourth literature provided Chinese revolutionary cinema ideas, plots, and characters for screenwriting. As a screenwriter, film critic, and translator who traversed revolutionary cinema and its May Fourth antecedents—both the short story tradition and the rich legacy of Republican era filmmaking—Xia Yan played a pivotal role in defining the direction of Chinese cinema after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.[17] In this section, I look at how, in the hands of Xia Yan, Chinese literary conventions were reinstated and recoded to accommodate classical Hollywood narration in order to adapt literary works into the filmic medium.

Xia Yan's speech on screenwriting (later published as *A Few Questions about Screenwriting* (*Xie dianying juben de jige wenti*) at the Beijing Film Academy in 1958 is one of the first systematic attempts to lay out the basic principles of screenwriting in Chinese cinema. Xia Yan lists the following motivations for his speech: (1) inadequate training in screenwriting at film institutes; (2) concerns about the quality of Chinese film; (3) "grammatical mistakes" in Chinese film, i.e. the lack of purpose (*mudixing*) in the use of technique; and (4) the lack of a systematic theory of screenwriting (*Xie dianying juben* 1-2). The perceived lack in terms of training, quality, and purpose became a motivation for formulating a coherent set of principles of screenwriting.

Interestingly, Xia turns to the Chinese literary tradition, and more specifically prose fiction (*xiaoshuo*), to establish the specificity of the filmic medium, as well as its artistic proximity to the novel. Xia maintains that film resembles the novel, rather than stage drama, because of its capacity to overcome the constraints of time and space: "From the perspective of screenwriting, film resembles the novel, rather than stage drama, because stage drama is limited by the three walls on stage" (*Xie dianying juben* 7). Xia associates screenwriting with the novel, whose artistic representation is not bounded by the theatrical stage. At the same time, Xia establishes the specificity and even supremacy of the filmic medium over stage drama and the novel in terms of its (1) expressive methods and (2) reproducibility.

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[17] Xia Yan (Shen Naixi) (1900-1995), whose career spans almost the entire twentieth century, is one of the pioneering screenwriters in Chinese film history. Xia joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1927 and was one of the leaders of the League of Left-Wing Writers when it was formed in 1930. Xia translated Maksim Gorky's novel *Mother,* as well as Vsevolod Pudovkin's *The Film Director and Film Material* in collaboration with Zheng Boqi. After 1932 Xia became involved in film circles and adapted several screenplays such as Mao Dun's *Spring Silkworms* (*Chuncan*). In 1955 Xia was appointed Vice-minister of Culture, but he was removed from the post ten years later in 1965. Xia was subjected to harsh criticism and spent more than eight years in prison during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Xia was rehabilitated in 1978, and his complete works were anthologized and published in 2005.

Xia maintains that cinema is integrated with technology and therefore has its unique expressive methods. For instance, a film has the visual capacity to depict how a character climbs a mountain with tracking, panning, and close-up shots. In contrast, in stage drama, the same action can only be expressed in the form of an actor's dialogue: "I just climbed the mountain and am simply exhausted!" (Xia, *Xie dianying juben* 8). According to Xia, cinema overcomes the constraints of the theatrical stage, where performers exaggerate their expressions and movements for the sake of the audience sitting in the last row of the theater. Film, unlike stage drama, can employ various camera movements and shot ranges such as the close-up, medium shot, and long shot, so that the audience can see clearly from every angle.

Apart from the expressive methods unique to film, Xia emphasizes the reproducibility and popular appeal of the filmic medium, which other artistic forms cannot surpass: a well-known novel can reach several hundred thousand to several million educated readers, whereas a film can reach an audience of millions among the working masses (*Xie dianying juben* 4). Film, because of its reproducibility and unique expressive methods that are distinct from stage drama and the novel, became a powerful medium harnessed by screenwriters such as Xia Yan for ideological and aesthetic purposes during the communist era.

In his speech, while Xia establishes the specificity of the filmic medium in comparison with other artistic forms, he nonetheless draws from the Chinese literary tradition to establish screenwriting as a craft. In Xia Yan's hands, Chinese literary conventions are reinstated and recoded to accommodate the specificity of the filmic medium and classical Hollywood narration. At the same time, classical Hollywood narration is recoded and explained in Chinese literary terms. A reinstatement of Chinese literary conventions allows Xia Yan to converge those conventions with classical Hollywood narration for the purpose of maintaining the clarity and comprehensibility of narrative film for a rural mass audience.

A few words about classical Hollywood narration and its influence on Chinese revolutionary cinema are necessary here. The principles of classical Hollywood narration can be summarized in terms of narrative structure, editing, and logic of spectatorship. Here I largely follow the concept of classical Hollywood narration as outlined by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson as an ideal type for the purposes of comparison and contrast with the Chinese case.

Narrative structure

1) Classical Hollywood narration builds a plausible fictional world, where events have a logical chain of cause and effect (narrative causality) with a high degree of resolution.

2) Classical Hollywood narration "tends to be only moderately self-conscious" and "seldom acknowledges its own address to the audience" (Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood" 22).

3) Classical Hollywood narration is characterized by a goal-oriented protagonist, who is situated in a dual plot of heterosexual romance and work.

4) Classical Hollywood narration establishes "an initial state of affairs which gets violated and which must then be set right" (Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood" 19).

Editing

1) Classical Hollywood narration "strives for utmost denotative clarity from moment to moment" by "making each shot the logical outcome of its predecessor and reorienting the spectators through repeated setups" (Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood" 26-27).

2) Classical Hollywood narration is characterized by continuity editing. Cutting is made invisible so that the audience can read the film without conscious effort. That is achieved by conventions such as the 180-degree rule, match on action, the eyeline match, and shot/reverse-shot, which establishes relationships and relays of looks.

Spectatorship

1) Spectators construct story time and space "according to schemata, cues and hypothesis-framing" (Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood" 29).

2) Spectators suspend their disbelief in the fictional world.

3) Spectators are manipulated to identify with key characters through the use of the close-ups.

By the 1930s, early Shanghai cinema had creatively mastered the narrative principles and stylistic devices of classical Hollywood narration to address the pedagogical concerns of Chinese revolutionary cinema. Xia Yan himself mentioned the many Hollywood films he saw when he first entered the Chinese film industry as a scriptwriter and a layman to film during the silent film era:

> When I first entered the film industry, there were no formal film scripts. There were only two words in what we called a “scene description” (*mubiao*): “meeting” and “departing.” It was in the silent film era, when dialogues were not written in film scripts. Actors and actresses improvised according to the directors’ demand and guidance. . . . There were very few books on films, and I couldn’t read Russian. What I read were translated from Japanese and English. Watching film was the primary way for me to learn. (Xia, *Xie dianying juben* 2-3)

Taking into account the influx and popularity of Hollywood movies in the Chinese market in semi-colonial Shanghai since the 1910s, Hollywood cinema as a culture industry traveled and influenced early Shanghai cinema, whose filmmakers strategically adapted classical Hollywood narration for revolutionary purposes. Miriam Hansen suggests that Shanghai films of the 1920s and 1930s are “porous enough to allow for multiple readings” (19, 20). *Daybreak* (*Tianming*) (Sun Yu, 1933), according to Hansen, achieves a “reconfiguration of the foreign” (19, 20). Following classical Hollywood narration, the first part of *Daybreak* is a melodrama about Lingling as a fallen woman, whereas the second part is a politically charged narrative about Lingling’s patriotic martyrdom as a prostitute. In a similar fashion, the narrative of *Queen of Sports* (*Tiyu huanghou*) (Sun Yu, 1934) follows classical Hollywood narration, except that the dual plot of romance and work is playfully adapted for pedagogical messaging.

In the course of this playful adaptation, the director Sun Yu subverts the Hollywood convention of shot/reverse-shot, creating effects that are both seductive and subversive (Figure 14). In the scene where Mr. Yun advises his student Lin Ying not to wear make-up during fitness training, Sun uses the convention of shot/reverse-shot not only to suggest romance, but also to instruct how patriotic athletes should behave. The sequence begins with a close-up shot of Mr. Yun looking at Lin Ying, succeeded by a medium and a close-up shot of Lin Ying holding her cosmetics. The camera then returns to a long shot of the "couple," followed by an intertitle that says: "Where do these things [cosmetics] come from?" Succeeding this is a close-up shot of Mr. Yun and an intertitle that says: "An athlete doesn't need facial powder and rouge," followed by a close-up shot of Lin Ying. The camera then proceeds to a medium shot of the "couple" as Lin Ying lays her hand on Mr. Yun's shoulder in a soliciting manner: "Mr. Yun, as long as you're willing to teach me, I'll listen to whatever you say!" The sequence ensues with an awkward moment as the "couple" suddenly restores their professional distance. The sequence ends with a medium shot of Mr. Yun's stern face and an intertitle that says: "You shouldn't be sitting here immediately after running. Get up quickly!" Here, the Hollywood convention of shot/reverse-shot is interrupted and subverted by Mr. Yun's pedagogical message in the form of an intertitle. The pedagogical intervention, I would argue, is all the more seductive, for it retains the teacher-and-student relationship, while allowing ambiguity and contingency in interpretation. Sun Yu's subversion of the Hollywood convention of shot/reverse-shot through the intervention of pedagogical messages instills an ideology of sports in a manner that is nonetheless seductive.

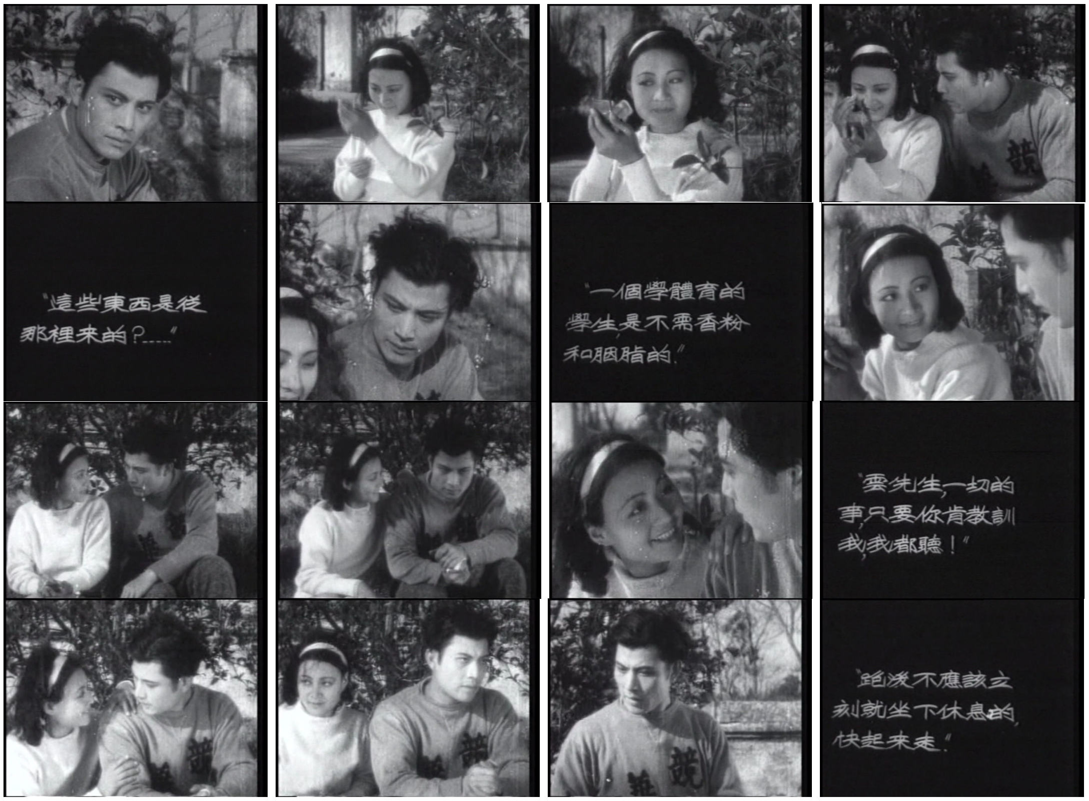
"這些東西是從那裡來的?....."
"一個學體育的學生是不需香粉和胭脂的."
"雲先生,一切的事只要你肯教訓我,我都聽!"
"跑後不應該立刻就坐下休息的,快起來走."

Figure 14: The playful subversion of the convention of shot/reverse-shot in *Queen of Sports* (1934)

The harnessing of classical Hollywood narration, heterosexual romance, and the convention of shot/reverse-shot in Chinese revolutionary cinema will be discussed in more detail in later parts of this chapter. The point here is to illustrate how classical Hollywood narration was creatively mastered by Chinese left-wing filmmakers in the 1930s. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, classical Hollywood narration persisted as an important cinematic mode in Chinese revolutionary cinema. More specifically, classical Hollywood narration was reinstated and recoded in Chinese literary terms by the authoritative screenwriter Xia Yan. Xia's discursive move to the Chinese literary tradition allowed him to adopt classical Hollywood narration without openly endorsing the Hollywood film establishment. Such a discursive move at the same time allowed Xia to assert the long-standing Chinese literary tradition, which served to legitimize screenwriting as a film art.

In line with classical Hollywood narration, Xia highlights the following priorities in his speech on screenwriting: (1) conciseness and clarity of chronological narration; (2) prominence of the protagonist; and (3) maintenance of continuity. Xia emphasizes that film is a one-time (*yiciguo*) experience, unlike literature, where one can turn the pages and re-read from the beginning. Therefore, clarity is especially important in screenwriting (Xia, *Xie dianying juben* 35). Xia describes film as the most "concise" (*jinglian*) art, whose purpose has to be made "clear" and "explicit" for the audience (*Xie dianying juben* 9).

In achieving clarity in filmic narration, Xia Yan implicitly subscribes to classical Hollywood narration, while at the same time he explicitly turns to the Chinese literary tradition for theoretical guidance: "Chinese poetry, fiction, and drama have a common characteristic: there are head and tail, clear narration, and clear layers (*Xie dianying juben* 12). Reverse narration, according to Xia, would cause confusion for a rural mass audience. Chronological narration is strengthened by the voice of a filmic narrator, who gives a background of the story in the opening of a film—a tradition which Xia traces back to Peking opera and Yuan drama: "In Peking opera and Yuan drama, *fumo* represents the voice of the author and tells the summary of the story" (*Xie dianying* *juben* 12). In the 1956 film adaptation of Lu Xun’s short story “The New Year’s Sacrifice,” for instance, a filmic narrator introduces the protagonist Xianglin Sao in a concise manner in the opening of the film. Converging with classical Hollywood narration that seldom acknowledges its own address to the audience except at the beginnings and endings of films, Xia Yan encourages explicit address to the audience in the opening of a film to maximize clarity and comprehensibility.

Following classical Hollywood narration that features a goal-oriented protagonist, Xia maintains that the filmic image of the protagonist must be “distinct” (*xianming*), so that it arouses the interest of the audience (*Xie dianying juben* 36). Xia makes the case that in film, the protagonist has to appear first, as opposed to Chinese drama, where supporting characters may appear first. For Xia, the beginning of a film has to introduce the social background and the relationship between characters with maximum clarity. Xia uses the Chinese term *ruxi*, which literally means “entering the play,” to describe how a film should strive for the audience’s diegetic absorption and suspension of disbelief. According to Xia, a film should “raise a question for the audience very quickly” at the beginning, so that “a question mark appears in the audience’s mind” (*Xie dianying juben* 37). Xia uses the Soviet film *Chapaev* (Georgi Vasilyev and Sergei Vasilyev, 1934), where the hero Chapaev appears as a leader fighting courageously in the opening of the film, as an example of a successful film opening that creates a distinct image of the protagonist.

Echoing classical Hollywood narration that establishes “an initial state of affairs which gets violated and which must then be set right” (Bordwell, “Classical Hollywood”

19), Xia uses the Chinese literary terms “*qi*” (opening), “*cheng*” (development), “*zhuan*” (turn), and “*he*” (resolution) to describe the flow of a narrative film (*Xie dianying juben* 54). The emphasis on narrative causality and continuity is expressed in the literary metaphor of “needlework” (*zhenxian*), which joins together paragraphs, chapters, scenes, and sequences (Xia, *Xie dianying juben* 58).

Xia situates “sequences” in film in relation to units and divisions in literary genres such as chapters (*zhanghui*) in the novel (*xiaoshuo*), *zhuanzhe* in opera (*xiqu*), and acts (*mu*) in modern drama (*xiandaiju*). Xia considers “paragraph” as the closest equivalent to “sequence”—a term he does not translate but retains in the English original. Xia describes a “sequence” as “a chronological order” (*shunxu*) and “a paragraph that connects” (*lianjie zhe de duanluo*) (*Xie dianying juben* 44). Xia values continuity (*xianjie*) between sequences and suggests that sequences in narrative film should be organized according to the chronological development of plot. According to Xia Yan, at the most basic level, a fade-in or a fade-out functions as a cinematic punctuation that divides a film into sequences.

Film Adaptations of May Fourth Literature in Early Communist China: *This Life of Mine* (1950) and *Corrosion* (1950)

Having briefly discussed the ways in which Chinese literary conventions were reinstated and recoded to accommodate classical Hollywood narration, this section looks at the ways in which film adaptations of May Fourth literature in early communist China strive to give May Fourth literature an afterlife in the filmic medium. In the following, brief analyses of the film adaptations *This Life of Mine* (*Wo zhe yibeizi*) (Shi Hui, 1950) and

Corrosion (*Fushi*) (Zuo Lin, 1950) will illustrate the prominence of script and dialogue in early communist film adaptations of May Fourth literature. I will then proceed to a close reading of the 1956 film adaptation of Lu Xun's short story "The New Year's Sacrifice" (1924) as a case study to demonstrate how the film transforms critical realism into revolutionary realism. I argue that film adaptations of May Fourth literature take on an entirely new entertainment and pedagogical value through (1) the appropriation of classical Hollywood narration; (2) the enticement of heterosexual romance; and (3) the creation of melodramatic moments in a moral universe of victims and villains typical of revolutionary films.

Given the popularity of the 1950 film adaptations of Lao She's novella *This Life of Mine* (1937) and Mao Dun's novel *Corrosion* (1941), as well as the canonical status of the original literary works, *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion* provide a point of departure for examining the aesthetics and politics of early communist film adaptations of May Fourth literature. *This Life of Mine* achieved the best box office among the eight films that were released during the New Year holiday in 1950, whereas *Corrosion* was one of the ten favorite domestic films in a readers' poll in the film magazine *The People's Cinema* (*Dazhong Dianying*) in 1950. *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion* are representative of the way classical Hollywood narration was employed to adapt May Fourth literature in the filmic medium. The convergence of classical Hollywood narration and May Fourth literary conventions strengthens the entertainment and pedagogical value of the film adaptations.

This Life of Mine and *Corrosion* share the following characteristics of classical Hollywood narration: (1) chronological narration, (2) prominence of the protagonist, and (3) maintenance of continuity. While the narrative structures of *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion* are largely chronological, both films begin with an explicit address to the audience in the form of a first-person reverse narration to maximize clarity, as well as to retain the literary quality of the original. Similar to the original literary works, *This Life of Mine* begins with the protagonist's reminiscence of his life, whereas *Corrosion* begins with the protagonist Weiming's revelation in the form of a diary. The prominent voices of the protagonists-narrators go hand in hand with the physical acts of turning the pages, which, throughout the film adaptations, function as cinematic punctuations that divide the films into sequences (Figure 15-16). Here, the literary quality and even the aura of written words are transformed and made comprehensible through voice-over narration and direct address to the audience.

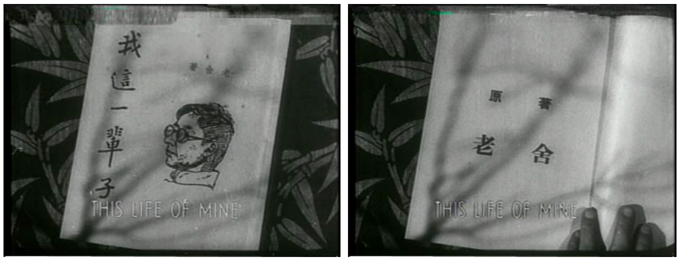

Figure 15a: The opening of *This Life of Mine* (1950).

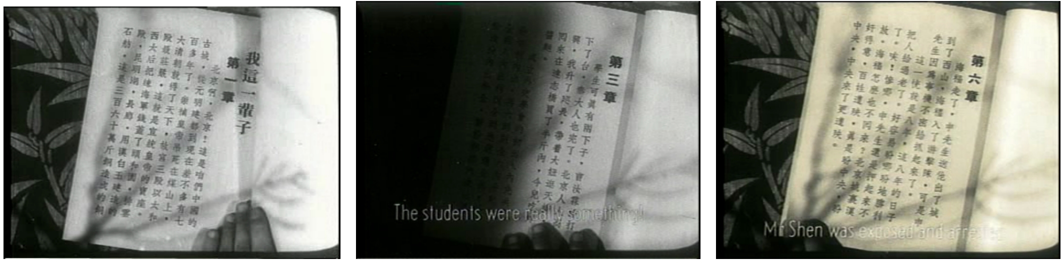
我這一輩子
第一章
第三章
The students were really something!
第六章
Mr Shen was exposed and arrested

Figure 15b: The physical act of turning the pages, accompanied by the off-screen voice of the protagonist-narrator, functions as a cinematic punctuation that divides a film into sequences.

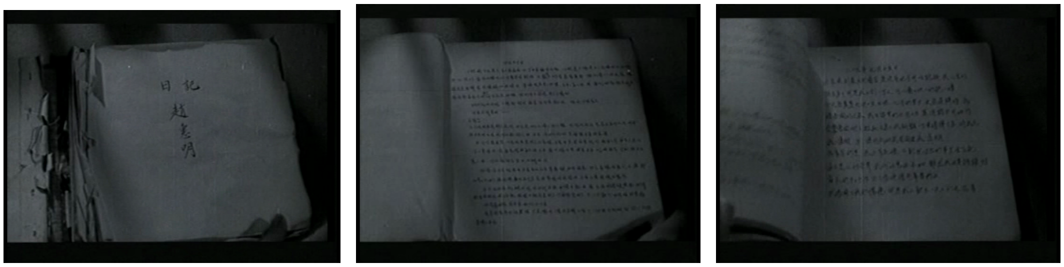

Figure 16: The opening of *Corrosion* (1950).

Echoing classical Hollywood narration that establishes “an initial state of affairs which gets violated and which must then be set right” (Bordwell, “Classical Hollywood” 19), Xia Yan uses the Chinese literary terms “*qi*” (opening), “*cheng*” (development), “*zhuan*” (turn), and “*he*” (resolution) to describe the flow of a narrative film (*Xie dianying juben* 54). Both film adaptations strive for clarity in the opening (*qi*) by presenting a distinct image of a protagonist in crisis. The combined use of voice-over narration and medium shots compels the audience to identify with the goal-oriented protagonists, who tell their stories as the narratives unfold (Figure 17-18). As a result of first-person reverse narration in the opening of the film adaptations, a question mark appears in the minds of the audience and propels the narrative forward: What is “this life of mine” that the protagonist has to tell? What is the secret that Weiming wants to tell?

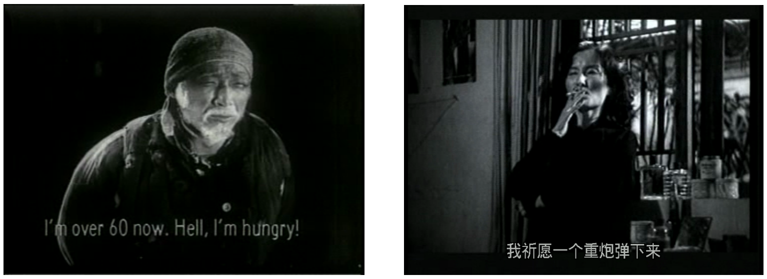
I'm over 60 now. Hell, I'm hungry!
我祈愿一个重炮弹下来

Figure 17, 18: In the openings of *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion*, the combined use of voice-over narration and medium close-ups compels the audience to identify with the protagonists.

For the sake of comprehensibility, the narratives of *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion* undergo considerable modifications to accommodate classical Hollywood narration. First, the narratives of the film adaptations are presented chronologically with maximum clarity. Second, the film adaptations create dramatic turning points (*zhuan*) and end with a high degree of resolution (*he*). Succeeding first-person reverse narration in the opening (*qi*) of the film adaptations are the chronological developments (*cheng*) of the protagonists' lives. Converging with classical Hollywood narration that presents events in a logical chain of cause and effect, *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion* chronicle the downfall of the protagonists. Following the plot of the original novella, *This Life of Mine* tells the young protagonist's happy days when he first entered the police profession—a respectable profession that provided him a stable income as well as job satisfaction. The adaptation ensues with the protagonist's witness of the Boxer Rebellion, the fall of the Qing Dynasty, the April Fifth movement, the Japanese invasion, and the Civil War between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party (the Japanese invasion and the Civil War are absent in the original novella). However, each change of government did not bring peace or prosperity. Ironically, the protagonist, as a policeman whose duty is to maintain law and order, could do nothing but turn a blind eye to corruption and violence throughout decades of turmoil.

The film adaptation creates a melodramatic turning point (*zhuan*) that is otherwise absent in the original work: the protagonist's daughter is captured by the Japanese military, after which the protagonist lets his son, Fuhai, join the communist army to avenge the enemies. The film ends with the protagonist being imprisoned by the

Nationalists, after which he becomes homeless, walking in the snow in his final moments (Figure 19). Unlike the original novella, in which Fuhai dies of illness, the film comes to a resolution (*he*) with a final shot of Fuhai holding a flag in victory, superimposed with a map of China (Figure 20).

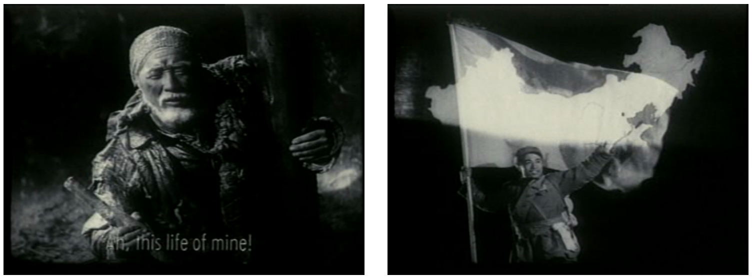
Ah, this life of mine!

Figure 19, 20: The final shots of *This Life of Mine*.

In a slightly different manner, the protagonist of *Corrosion*, Weiming, is situated in a dual plot of heterosexual romance and work typical of classical Hollywood narration. Unlike the beginning of the original novel, in which Weiming narrates in reminiscence her abandonment of her new-born child, the opening of the film adaptation presents a love triangle as Weiming wavers between two men. Weiming eventually marries the man who has money and status. However, the marriage turns out to be a deception: Weiming's husband discreetly uses Weiming as a spy for the Nationalists and eventually leaves her (Figure 21-22). The film ensues with Weiming's psychological struggle as a spy: she wants to put an end to her life of lies, but always gives in in the face of threat and danger. The dramatic turning point of the film comes when Weiming is given the mission to rekindle romance and to persuade her former lover, Xiao Zhao, to betray the communist cause. The film comes to a resolution with Xiao Zhao's heroic sacrifice and Weiming's change of heart.

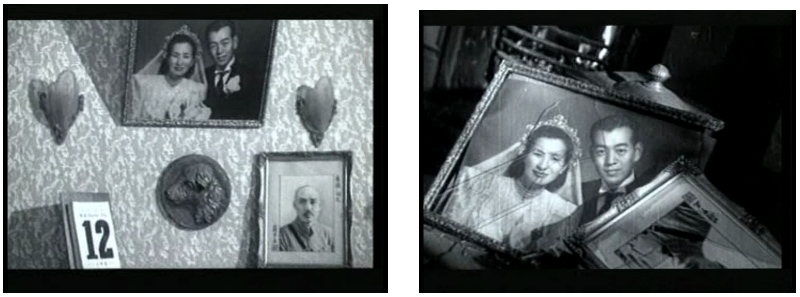

Figure 21, 22: Weiming's marriage turns out to be a deception: her husband uses her as a spy for the Nationalists.

The adherence to classical Hollywood narration allows the film adaptations to take on new entertainment and pedagogical value that is otherwise absent in the original literary texts. For instance, in *This Life of Mine*, the addition of a melodramatic turning point (the capture of the protagonist's daughter by the Japanese military) activates anger and instills in the audience a sense of crisis, and hence facilitates diegetic absorption. The addition of the turning point also allows the narrative to take on political and pedagogical implications: Fuhai's commitment to the communist cause in order to avenge the enemies (another addition that is otherwise absent in the original text) becomes the key to narrative resolution. In the case of *Corrosion*, the spotlight on the love triangle in the opening and Weiming's eventual confrontation with her former lover, Xiao Zhao, after years of separation function as a romantic enticement, further facilitating diegetic absorption. The return of Xiao Zhao also adds a patriotic sentiment to the film adaptation as a whole. Xiao Zhao's heroic sacrifice, which inspires Weiming to the good path in the end, is the key to narrative resolution.

Apart from narrative structure, the film adaptations employ stylistic devices typical of classical Hollywood narration to address the pedagogical concerns of Chinese revolutionary cinema. In terms of continuity editing, for instance, *Corrosion* employs the 180-degree rule and shot-reverse-shot not only to establish relationships and the exchange of looks, but also to accentuate tension in human relationships in terms of class and political leanings. Succeeding Weiming's reverse narration in the opening of the film is a shot/reverse-shot series that establishes the relationship of a couple (Weiming and Xiao Zhao) that is about to part ways (Figure 23). The frontality of the shots accentuates the couple's different political leanings (Nationalist vs. Communist) and the impossibility of compromise. In the later part of the film, a shot/reverse-shot series (also with remarkable frontality), combined with the use of lighting and shadow, conveys tension in the conversation between Weiming and the big boss (her oppressor) (Figure 24). In line with the pedagogical concerns of Chinese revolutionary cinema, stylistic devices typical of classical Hollywood narration are employed to convey the subtleties of class inequalities in everyday human relationships.

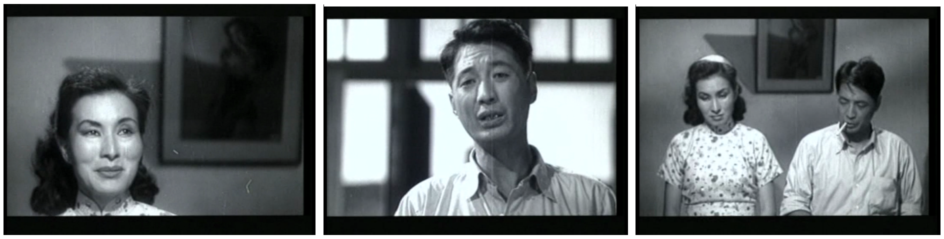

Figure 23

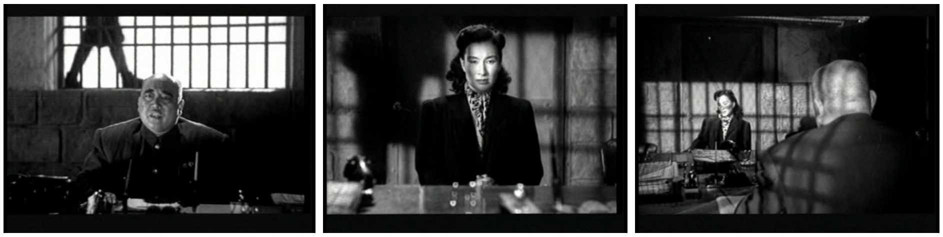

Figure 24: In *Corrosion*, the remarkable frontality of a series of shot/reverse-shot accentuates tensions in various relationships.

This Life of Mine portrays disparities between the rich and the poor through match-on-action and graphic-match cuts. In the sequence where Mr. Qin's wife complains about the lack of good shoes in the city, a graphic match between a medium shot of a table full of shoes and a medium shot of a worn-out shoe depicts vividly the disjunction between upper-class luxury and the day-to-day reality of the poor (Figure 25). In addition to that, the sequence where Mr. Qin buys her wife a Japanese perfume that costs fifty dollars is immediately succeeded by three close-up shots of a child buyer's hand as she lays down thirty dollars on the table (Figure 26). Here, the graphic match between Mr. Qin's purchase of the perfume and the child-buyer's purchase of a baby from a poor mother in desperation sharpens the disjunction as well as the irony of the situation. In those two examples, match on action and graphic match not only allow scenes to move seamlessly from one to another in continuity, but also communicate class contradictions and heighten dramatic effects for spectatorial identification.

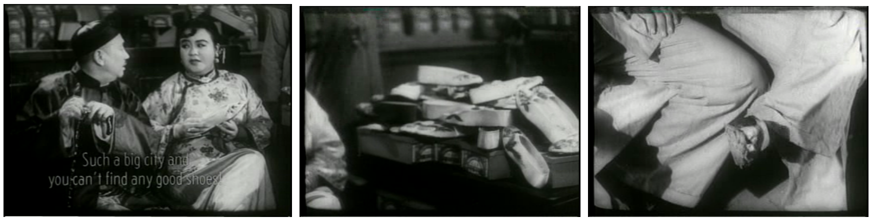
Such a big city and
you can't find any good shoes!

Figure 25: A graphic match that depicts disparity between the rich and the poor.

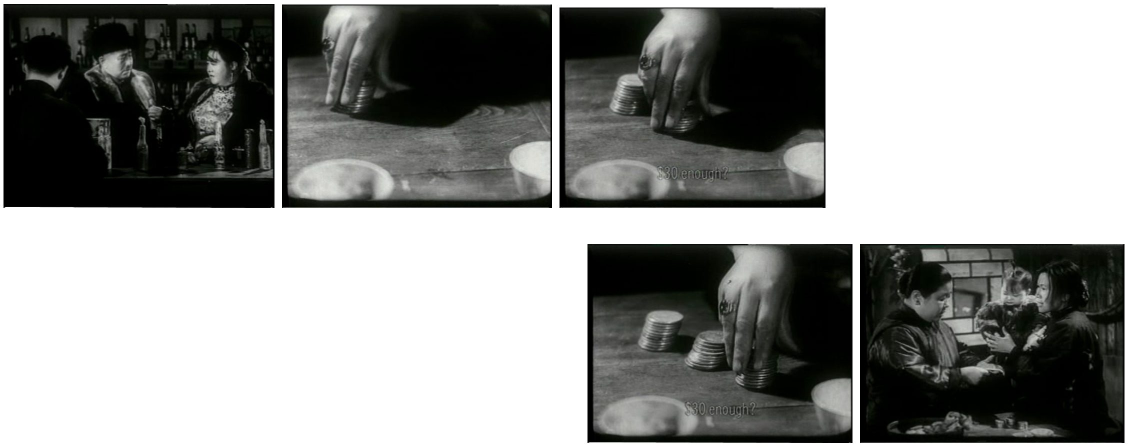
$30 enough?
$30 enough?

Figure 26: Two scenes are joined together through three close-up shots of an anonymous hand that lays down thirty dollars on the table. The clever use of match on action establishes equivalence in monetary value but disparity in use value and exchange value.

In *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion*, villains and victims are depicted as mutually antagonized through juxtapositions of shots to enhance dramatic effects. In *This Life of Mine,* the character Hu Li, which literally means “fox,” functions as a political enemy (representing the Nationalists) that is otherwise absent in the original novella. In a torture scene typical of revolutionary films, the dramatic juxtaposition of shots between Hu Li the villain and the suffering protagonist facilitates spectatorial identification with the protagonist (Figure 27). In a similar fashion, in *Corrosion*, superimposition is used to convey the way Weiming’s life is controlled by the villain (Figure 28).

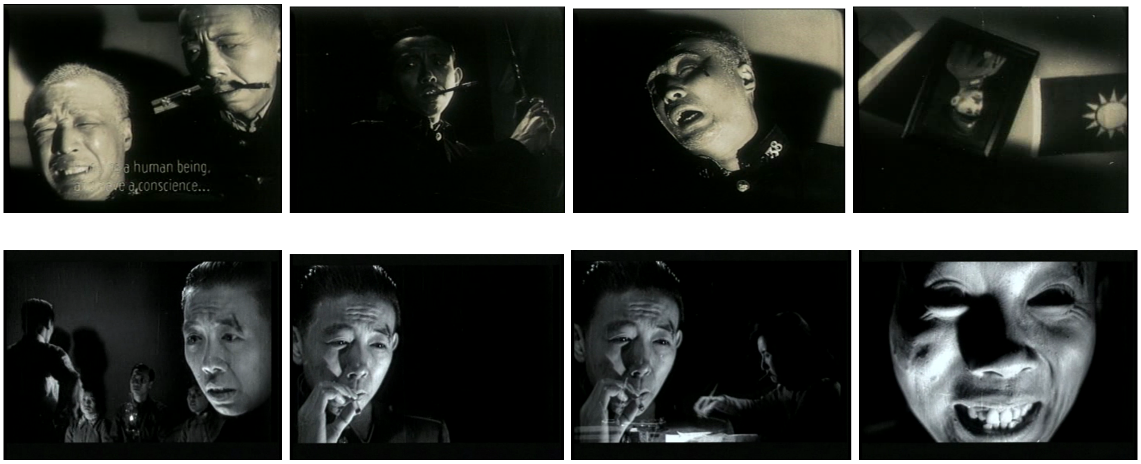

Figure 27, 28: In *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion*, villains and victims are antagonized through dramatic juxtaposition of shots.

The use of montage in *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion* not only condenses time but also sharpens conflict between villains and victims. In *This Life of Mine,* the use of montage condenses a series of historical events into a succession of images, such as a close-up shot of a fearsome lion statue that evokes brutality (Figure 29). In *Corrosion*, a striking montage sequence, through rapid cutting, juxtaposes close-ups of Weiming, her husband, and the fearsome lion face as Weiming was caught in the act of reading her husband’s diary and secret documents (Figure 30). I will discuss in more detail the use of montage in Chinese revolutionary cinema in the next chapter.

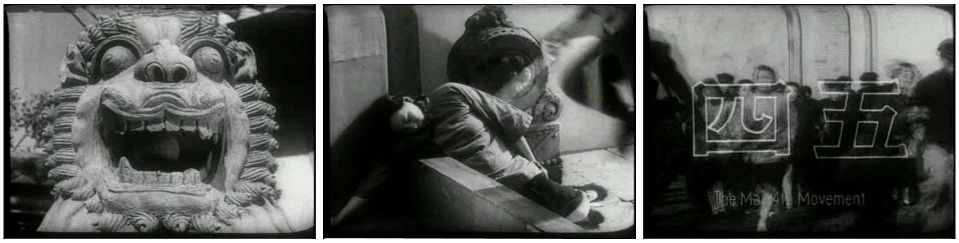

Figure 29: A montage sequence that condenses time in *This Life of Mine*.

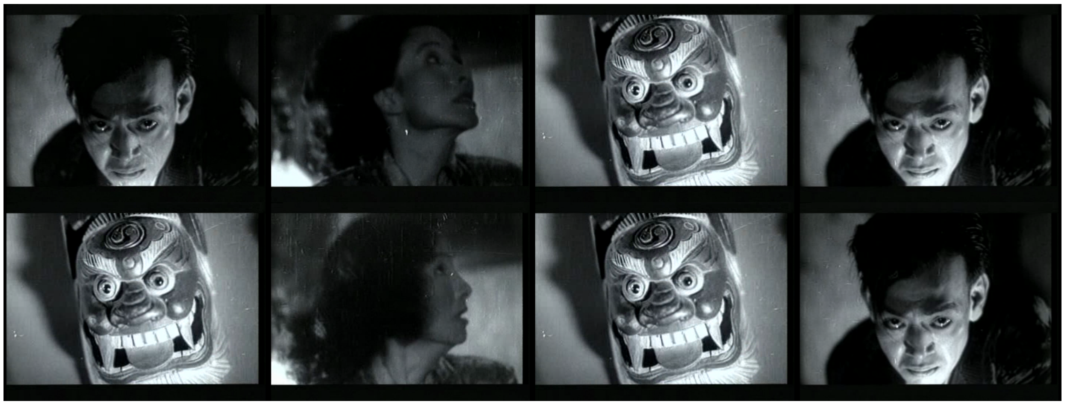

Figure 30: A montage sequence in *Corrosion*.

The adherence to classical Hollywood narration and use of montage and continuity editing (through shot/reverse-shot and match on action) not only make comprehensible the original narratives in the filmic medium, but also create pleasure, dramatic shocks, and polemical messages otherwise absent in the original literary works. The prominence of the script through first-person voice-over narration retains the literary quality of the original May Fourth literary works and facilitates identification with the protagonists. These brief analyses of the two films illustrate the convergence of classical Hollywood narration and May Fourth literary conventions. In the following, I will proceed to the 1956 film adaptation of Lu Xun’s “The New Year Sacrifice” (1924) as a case study of the transformation from May Fourth realism to revolutionary realism.

The New Year's Sacrifice, I would argue, is exceptional in its handling of classical Hollywood narration, heterosexual romance, and melodramatic shocks.

The Revolutionary Art of Storytelling:

The New Year's Sacrifice (1956) as Revolutionary Realism

Lu Xun's short story "The New Year's Sacrifice" (*Zhufu*) (1924), a canonical work of May Fourth literature, was adapted into a film directed by Sang Hu in 1956 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Lu Xun's death. A brief commentary titled "The Film Script is Good, and the Film is Good Too" in *Renmin ribao* describes the film as "a courageous and successful creation" that creates "visual pleasure," turning the literary work into "a visible filmic image" while retaining "fidelity to the original" (Jin). If we consider the film adaptation as an intersemiotic translation across media (from one system of signs into another, as Roman Jakobson suggests)—from literature to film, what are the losses and gains? To what extent does the film adaptation achieve equivalence and fidelity to the original, making it simultaneously "filmic" and "Lu Xun-esque" as the commentary describes? Does the film adaptation render an afterlife to the original by altering it with new meanings and significance? The commentary, published as an endorsement of the film just three days after the national commemoration, is a window into the aesthetics and politics of film adaptation during the Communist era, when the creation of revolutionary art for the masses and the construction of Lu Xun's legacy both were persistent concerns of the Party.

The following sections look at the historical transformation of Lu Xun's original short story as an example of the transition from critical realism to revolutionary realism in the filmic medium. More specifically, I examine how realism as an aesthetic experiment, an evaluative process, and a paradigmatic mode of storytelling in both its literary and filmic forms is historically contingent from the May Fourth era to Mao Zedong's era. I will look at the ways in which the 1956 film adaptation of "The New Year's Sacrifice," as a product of a period of abundant film production during the Seventeen Years, serves as an example and a testament to the transformation from Lu Xun's critical realism to revolutionary realism, and from literature to film—and how those aesthetic transformations were politically motivated during the second half of the turbulent twentieth century.

In *The Scandals of Translation*, Lawrence Venuti contests the notion of translation as a derivative and secondary activity and advocates for greater visibility of translation by redefining it as a form of authorship and scholarship. Venuti's argument has resonance for the study of film adaptation, which is usually seen as derivative of and secondary to the original. *The New Year's Sacrifice*, for the revolutionary purpose of popularization, takes on an entirely new clarity, simplicity, and force that are otherwise absent in the original literary text. The film adaptation achieves this in two ways. First, the film adaptation replaces the complex temporality of narration and the ambivalent voice of the narrator in Lu Xun's text with a chronological narration in the pedagogical and omniscient voice of History. Second, the film adaptation appropriates classical Hollywood narration and creates visual pleasure by indulging spectators in heterosexual romance and melodramatic moments, fulfilling both the entertainment and pedagogical demands of revolutionary cinema. The film adaptation visualizes with unprecedented clarity and force a moral universe of victims and villains typical of revolutionary realism. It implicitly construes Lu Xun's earlier experiments in realism as a limit to be successfully overcome, all the while claiming fidelity to the original and elevating it to a canonical status for the needs of various cultural constituencies.

"The New Year's Sacrifice": Critical Realism

For the purpose of this essay, the highly contested term "realism" refers to aesthetic experiments often carried out in the name of revolution, a mode of storytelling and a paradigm of filmic form, and an evaluative process that is historically contingent. The term "critical realism" is used here to refer to Lu Xun's early experimentation with the realist short story in representing and mediating social reality through the ironic stance of the mediating narrator, which is a hallmark of his short stories in *Call to Arms* (1923) and *Hesitation* (1925) written in the May Fourth era.

The struggle for realism is emblematic of China's entry into modernity: realism was a continuous thread in revolutionary consciousness beginning with the May Fourth literary revolution, and it was later revisited by Mao and his cultural cadres in their creation of a new proletarian literature and art. The May Fourth literary revolution that began in 1917 witnessed not only the use of the vernacular language as the medium of literary expression, but also the translation of foreign texts that sparked experimentation with Western literary forms such as realism. As Theodore Huters suggests, realism was construed and perceived as a successive stage in an evolutionary progression of genres from classicism to romanticism, thus "realism became a token of faith that Chinese literature was moving forward along the universal path pioneered by Western literary practice" (154). In that sense, realism as an aesthetic experiment promised a kind of social evolution and functioned as a currency accepted by what Pascale Casanova describes as the "world republic of letters" dominated by the European West. The success of realism as a tool of social reform in the West, Huters further notes, became a model for the May Fourth intellectuals' search for a literature that would critically engage with social reality. Therefore, realism was appealing for May Fourth intellectuals, for it was believed to function as a critical window on social reality and a force for social betterment. Lu Xun, as one of the pioneers of the May Fourth literary revolution, experimented with the realist short story to awaken the nation from feudal practices that produced oppressions of various kinds. The victimization of peasants and the role of the intellectual became one of the persistent concerns in Lu Xun's realist short stories.

One of the most distinctive features of Lu Xun's critical realism is his use of the ironic and ambivalent position of the narrator to highlight the limits of realism in mediating social reality, and "The New Year's Sacrifice" is an example of that. In *The Limits of Realism*, Marston Anderson suggests that Lu Xun is conscious of the limits of realism, and offers in his stories "a critique of his own method and of the realist project": "the realist narrative, by imitating at a formal level the relation of the oppressor to the oppressed, is captive to the logic of that oppression and ends by merely *reproducing* [my emphasis] it" (*Limits of Realism* 91). Anderson refers to the ways in which the absence of overt authorial intervention characteristic of the realist narrative reproduces oppression rather than eliminating it. In a similar fashion, David Der-wei Wang describes Lu Xun's narratorial position as that of a "frustrated realist" who works within the limits of realism as a critical tool (10). Central to these discussions of the limits of realism in representing reality is Lu Xun's highly self-conscious use of the narratorial position to problematize historical agency and any possibilities of positive moral actions on the part of the intellectuals as a class. The mediating narrator "I" in "The New Year's Sacrifice" provides an example of the critical realism Lu Xun engenders.

"The New Year's Sacrifice" begins with the narrator's return to Lu town and his confrontation with Xianglin Sao, a middle-aged maid kicked out by the Lu family who questions the narrator about whether Hell exists or not. The narrative ensues with the narrator's evasion of Xianglin Sao's question and his eventual comfort of having avoided her question by saying "can't say for sure" (*shuobuqing*). However, the news of Xianglin Sao's death leaves the narrator feeling somewhat guilty, and he begins to tell readers her full story: from Xianglin Sao's deceased husband to her escape to the Lu family, from her second marriage to the unfortunate death of her husband and son and ultimately Xianglin Sao's downfall and death. The narrative ends with the narrator feeling quite at ease in the midst of the sounds of the New Year celebration.

Lu Xun, through the equivocal position of the ineffectual narrator-bystander, throws into doubt the possibility of sympathy on the part of storytellers, listeners, and readers. At stake is the usefulness of storytelling and literature in mediating social reality. The crux of "The New Year's Sacrifice" lies in the ironic position of the narrator who, in the process of storytelling, gradually shirks responsibility, and in the end detaches himself from Xianglin Sao's tragedy: "wrapped in this medley of sound, relaxed and at ease, the doubt which had preyed on me from dawn to early night was swept clean away by the atmosphere of celebration . . .” (Lu Hsun 143). The narrator feels like a “complete fool” and “hesitates” when confronted with Xianglin Sao’s question about the existence of hell, and his answer that one “can’t say for sure” is, he says, a “most useful phrase”: “by simply concluding with this phrase ‘can’t say for sure,’ one can free oneself of all responsibility” (Lu Hsun, trans. Yang 128, with modifications). Lu Xun’s use of a non-heroic protagonist and a non-heroic narrator, his gradual unveiling of what is concealed, and the concealment of the world’s fictionality by the absence of overt authorial intervention give the text formal characteristics typical of nineteenth-century European realism.[18]

However, through the non-intervention and moral vacillations of the narrator, Lu Xun implicates the text as an accomplice in reproducing social injustice and reveals the limits of realism in mediating and acting upon social reality to cure social ills. As Anderson suggests:

> [T]he ‘I’ who narrates her [Xianglin Sao’s] story is not in any direct sense responsible for her sufferings (he remains peripheral to the plot), but he has the power that she lacks to vocalize her grief, and has done so forcibly for the reader. Yet his failure to go one step further and use his power to grant meaning to her story makes him, the text implies, a guilty

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[18] Realism, according to Erich Auerbach, creates multiple consciousness and gives voices to the low. Edward Said conceives realism as the third seminal point of Western literary history, succeeding the first and second seminal points when Christianity shatters the classical balance between high and low, after which reality is represented as human in Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*. See Auerbach.

> accomplice of the superstition-ridden society that has produced her tragedy. (Anderson, “Morality” 41)

Indeed, the narrator’s act of storytelling reproduces the victimization of Xianglin Sao. As Xianglin Sao repeats her story over and over again (dialogized by the narrator in reminiscence): “I was really stupid, really,” the narrator reproduces her plight in his cynical voice: “she probably did not realize that her story, after having been turned over and tasted by people for so many days, had long since become stale, only exciting disgust and contempt” (Lu Hsun 140). Here, through the narrator’s recreation of Xianglin Sao’s voice and consciousness, her plight is vocalized and repeated—only to be reproduced and perpetuated in the voice and consciousness of the narrator. Lu Xun’s creation of multiple consciousness, the use of complex narration, and the lack of an authoritative voice allow him to establish an ironic, critical distance to articulate the failure and negativity that lie at the heart of his realist project, therefore giving a highly self-reflexive quality to the text as an example of critical realism.

Revolutionary Realism

Apart from being an aesthetic experiment and a mode of storytelling, realism is also a historically contingent evaluative process that shapes, produces and sustains certain aesthetic values and practices reinforced by institutions and various individuals. In “Contingencies of Value,” Barbara Herrnstein Smith suggests that “every literary work is a product of a complex evaluative feedback loop” (45). By this, Smith refers to the ways in which artistic creation functions as “a paradigm of evaluative activity” that constitutes value judgments, cultural policy, and acts of evaluation that are ideologically motivated either explicitly or implicitly (44). The contingent variability and mutability of the term “realism” as a labeling of cultural productions, including film, are indicative of such a historically contingent evaluative process from the May Fourth era to Mao’s era. As Huters suggests:

> What seems to be a commonsensical category ‘realism’ kept escaping its ostensibly evident definition and revealing its subsets and eventual permutations—critical realism, social realism, proletarian realism, and romantic realism—taken as a whole to serve to discount the notion that realism could ever have constituted a discursive category stable enough to provide a source of positive intellectual guidance. (152)

In the discourse on the creation of proletarian literature and art beginning in the 1930s, realism was given new clothes. The term “revolutionary realism,” officially endorsed in 1958, functioned as a kind of positivity that was closely tied with the revolutionary cause, while Lu Xun’s early experimentation with critical realism during the May Fourth era was implicitly construed as a negativity and a limit to be overcome.[19]

While Lu Xun was canonized as a revolutionary writer, his experimentation with critical realism was implicitly disapproved of and rewritten by Zhou Yang and Mao, who imbued revolutionary art for the masses with positivity and historical agency. Zhou Yang, writing on realism in 1936, critiques old-style realism imported from the West as the "unworthy descendants" of the bourgeoisie ("Thoughts on Realism" 337-338). Zhou formulates a new revolutionary realism that would transform and act upon the world around man: "Although the realists have attacked society's ugliness and exposed its defects, they stop at criticism, contributing nothing positive. . . . In this passivity, this contemplative nature, lie the basic faults of old-style realism" ("Thoughts on Realism" 337-338). Here, Zhou Yang implicitly constructs an alternative revolutionary trajectory with revolutionary realism as the apex that transcends the "bourgeois old-style realism" imported from the West as an aesthetic model during the May Fourth literary revolution. Although Zhou Yang was one of the most important cultural policy makers involved in the canonization of Lu Xun, his critique of old-style realism implicitly put Lu Xun's early experimentation with realism, a form that keeps an ironic and critical distance from any positive moral actions, in pejorative terms.[20]

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[19] This chapter uses the term “revolutionary realism” as a term distinctive from Soviet socialist realism. While the term “socialist realism” was borrowed from the Soviet Union and was adopted as a Chinese phenomenon from 1953 to 1956, from mid-1957 to late 1958, socialist realism was re-evaluated worldwide due to de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union in 1956. The term “revolutionary realism” was used by Mao at a conference in 1958: “Proletarian literature and art ought to adopt the creative method of the combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism” (Yang 91).

In a similar fashion, Mao, while extolling and canonizing Lu Xun as "the sage of new China," rejects Lu Xun's satirical style of writing in his talk at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942: "The style of the essay should not simply be like Lu Xun's. Here we can shout at the top of our voices and have no need for veiled and roundabout expressions, which are hard for the people to understand. . . . We are not opposed to satire in general, what we must abolish is the abuse of satire" (479-480). In the talk, Mao, like Zhou Yang, attributes positivity and historical agency to revolutionary art, and maintains that revolutionary literature and art, as the "cogs and wheels" of the revolutionary cause, should not stop at exposing dark forces, but should go one step further and extol revolutionary struggles and "help the masses to propel history forward" (470, 474). Mao's formulation of revolutionary art and the passionate belief in historical agency, like Zhou Yang's formulation, is implicitly opposed to the ambivalent and passive stance of Lu Xun's mediating narrator, which is a bedrock of his critical realism. The malleability of the term "realism" in the hands of Zhou Yang and Mao highlights the historically contingent evaluative process underlying the deceptively simple term.

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[20] In Zhou Yang's *Makesi zhuyi yu wenyi* (Marxism, Literature, and Art), Lu Xun's writings are frequently quoted and juxtaposed with that of Lenin, Engels, Mao, and Gorky in the process of canonization.

In her discussion on realism, Casanova does not consider the ways in which the struggle for realism on the periphery of the world republic of letters takes place in other cultural productions such as film. In fact, the struggle for realism on the periphery is a kind of cultural revolution that radically challenges the very notion of literariness and the value attached to it that is posited on a level of literacy limited to certain classes of society. Revolutionary realism can be understood not merely as a literary phenomenon, but as a full-fledged, politically motivated aesthetic experiment in all cultural production that stretches the limits of critical and social realism and even the very notion of literariness itself. Only by taking into account film productions and the network of intertextuality—"a reservoir of images, archetypes, topoi, characters and episodes, passages of verbal tags, repeatedly invoked and recurrently applied to new situations and circumstances"—that constitute revolutionary realism can we understand the "complex evaluative feedback loop" that underlies every work of cultural production (Smith 45, 50).

"The New Year's Sacrifice": from Literature to Film

The 1956 film adaptation of “The New Year’s Sacrifice” is an example of how Lu Xun’s early experiment with realism is implicitly construed as a limit to be successfully overcome by revolutionary realism. In this section, I explore the ways in which the film adaptation creates visual pleasure, transforming the original short story into a work of revolutionary realism in the filmic medium. More specifically, I look at how the film adaptation forcefully takes on an entirely new entertainment and pedagogical value that is otherwise absent in the original literary text.

Xia Yan and Sang Hu, the scriptwriter and director of *The New Year’s Sacrifice*, describe the film adaptation, released on the twentieth anniversary of Lu Xun’s death, as a serious and glorious “political mission” (Xia, “Zatan gaibian” 119) (Sang, *Sang Hu* 238). Both Xia Yan and Sang Hu traverse revolutionary cinema and its May Fourth antecedents—the short story tradition and the rich legacy of Republican era filmmaking.[21] Prior to the 1956 film adaptation of “The New Year’s Sacrifice,” Xia Yan had adapted Mao Dun’s novella *Spring Silkworms* (*Chuncan*) into a film in 1933 and Leo Tolstoy’s *Resurrection* into a modern stage play (*huaju*) in 1943. In fact, the 1956 film adaptation of “The New Year’s Sacrifice” was not the first dramatic adaptation of Lu Xun’s original short story. “The New Year’s Sacrifice” was first adapted into a *yueju* (Shaoxing opera) by theater director Nan Wei in 1946, and it became a milestone in

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[21] Sang Hu (Li Peilin) (1916-2004), one of the most prolific directors in Chinese film history, adapted and directed over thirty films in various genres throughout his career. Sang pioneered the three “firsts” in Chinese cinema: the first color opera film *Liangshanbo yu Zhuyingtai* (1953), the first color narrative film *The New Year’s Sacrifice* (1956), and the first three-dimensional narrative film (*liti gushipian*) *Adventures of the Magician* (*Moshushi de qiyu*) (1962). A fan of Peking opera as well as Hollywood film, Sang established himself in the film circle in 1941 with his first screenplay *Spirit and Flesh* (*Ling yu rou*) under the guidance of Zhu Shilin. Sang also collaborated with Zhang Ailing and directed *Long Live the Wife* (*Taitai wansui*) (1947), and continued to make films such as *Midnight* (*Ziye*) (1981) after the Cultural Revolution.

yueju reform at the time. Lu Xun's short story was later adapted again by Nan Wei into the *yueju* film *Xianglin Sao* in 1948, starring the original cast of *yueju* actors (neither the director nor the actors had film experience), with Xianglin Sao played by Yuan Xuefen.[22] Xia Yan recalled that since "The New Year's Sacrifice" had been adapted into different media several times, he could draw from previous successes and failures. Xia Yan therefore "courageously" accepted the "mission" of writing the script for the 1956 film adaptation of "The New Year's Sacrifice" ("Zatan gaibian" 119).

One of the things Xia Yan strove for in the film adaptation was popularization (*tongsuhua*)—since the targeted audience was no longer readers from the intellectual class but spectators from the general working masses ("Zatan gaibian" 119). The indexicality, reproducibility, and visual and audio capacity of the filmic medium render the immediacy of storytelling to the masses more effectively, and film circulates more widely than a written literary text that is accessible only to the literate segment of society. In "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," Walter Benjamin maintains that technological reproducibility shatters the aura of art—originality, authenticity, and "here-and-now"—and opens up possibilities of bringing art to the masses. In the context of Chinese revolutionary cinema, film technology shatters the aura of art as exclusive to the enjoyment of the bourgeoisie and becomes a powerful entertainment and pedagogical tool in bringing art to the masses. Mao asserts in his talks at Yan'an in 1942: "since our literature and art are basically for the workers, peasants, and soldiers, 'popularization' means to popularize among the workers, peasants, and soldiers, and 'raising standards' means to advance from their present level" (468). Since "popularization" was a higher priority than "raising standards" in the 1950s, Xia Yan and his cultural cadres decided to allocate all the resources to produce 16mm film projectors first, and then gradually proceed to the production of 35mm film projectors—a formulation Xia Yan called "raising standard from the foundation of popularization" (*Xia Yan quanji* 311; vol. 6). The 1956 film adaptation of "The New Year's Sacrifice," as the first color narrative film (*caise gushipian*) in China, is in fact a technological leap from China's "shameful" position, described by a film critic who lamented in the 1940s that the Chinese film industry was not even able to produce its own film negatives, let alone develop naturalistic color photography (*tianranse sheying*) (Ban 39). The filmic medium not only offered an unprecedented immediacy in bringing Lu Xun's short story to the masses more effectively, but also allowed creativity in adapting and translating the textuality of the original literary text into a new visuality, sensuality, and rhetoricity offered by the filmic medium.

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[22] Yuan Xuefen (1922-), a renowned *yueju* actress, played an important role in *yueju* reform in the 1940s. When the *yueju Xianglin Sao* was first made into a film in 1948, film production was delayed significantly since neither the director nor the actors had any experience in film studio. It was said that even though over 20,000 feet of negatives worth more than two films were consumed in four months, the film was still not finished. Additional filming was needed since there was no way to edit what was already filmed. See "Xianglin Sao manmanliu" (The slow-moving *Xianglin Sao*).

Apart from the goal of popularization, Xia Yan saw fidelity to the original as one of his missions. While acknowledging that adaptation is not the same as creative writing, Xia Yan nonetheless describes the work of adaptation as "a creative labor" ("Zatan gaibian" 115). Using the three-hour-long film adaptation of *War and Peace* as an example, Xia Yan describes the work of film adaptation as that which necessarily "selects," "extracts," and "crystallizes" the essence and spiritual quality of the literary original (“Zatan gaibian” 117). Film adaptation, for Xia Yan, is an intersemiotic transferal from one artistic medium to another through the use of additional gestures and images—“sometimes one has to exaggerate, reduce, or supplement the original in order to turn it into an audio and visual form” (“Zatan gaibian” 117). Highly aware of the impossibility of literal translation and formal equivalence because of the transferal from written to visual and aural representation, Xia Yan nevertheless strives for dynamic equivalence in adapting the original literary text into film. Although exaggeration, reduction, and supplementation are necessary, the original is that which governs translatability: “Even the addition, deletion and modification of small details should not transgress and violate the theme and style unique to the original” (Xia, “Zatan gaibian” 118). In the following, I argue that it is precisely through the addition, deletion, and modification of small details that the film adaptation of “The New Year’s Sacrifice” transcends the limits of the original to fulfill the entertainment and pedagogical demands of revolutionary realism. By claiming fidelity to the original nevertheless, the film adaptation elevates the character Xianglin Sao into an icon in the new revolutionary narrative mode.

Adherence to Classical Hollywood Narration: Re-narrativization and Temporality

Similar to early film adaptations such as *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion*, *The New Year’s Sacrifice* follows classical Hollywood narration, which presents a logical chain of cause and effect with a high degree of narrative resolution. Harry Kuoshu suggests that “the narrative structure of *The New Year’s Sacrifice* illustrates certain common patterns of filmmaking in the late 1950s”—more specifically the narrative structure of *qi* (opening), *cheng* (development), *zhuan* (turn), and *he* (resolution) suggested by Xia Yan (68). However, Kuoshu does not look at the ways in which the narrative structure of *qi*, *cheng*, *zhuan*, and *he* at the same time accommodates classical Hollywood narration to enhance the comprehensibility and entertainment value of the film adaptation. I suggest that, as in the case of *This Life of Mine* and *Corrosion*, the convergence of classical Hollywood narration and May Fourth literary conventions in *The New Year's Sacrifice* strengthens the entertainment and pedagogical value of the film adaptation.

In line with classical Hollywood narration and the revolutionary goal of popularization, *The New Year's Sacrifice* replaces the complex mode of narration and the ambivalent voice of the narrator in Lu Xun's original text with a straightforward and chronological narration in the celebratory voice of History. The straight-forward chronological narration gives the film a new sense of clarity, rhetoricity, and positivity in line with Zhou Yang's and Mao's formulations. As Paul Clark suggests, in the film adaptation, "complex narrative modes were abandoned for the sake of a more readily comprehensible exposition reminiscent of traditional storytelling" (110). In the opening (*qi*), the film adaptation replaces the voice of the diegetic narrator in Lu Xun's original text with the passionate voice of an extra-diegetic filmic narrator-storyteller, who tells the story of Xianglin Sao with a positive beginning and a positive ending. In her analysis of narrative temporality in *Crows and Sparrows* (*Wuya yu maque*) (Zheng Junli, 1949), Yiman Wang describes the film as exemplifying a "historical threshold moment" and an "anticipatory mentality," achieved by a strictly chronological diegetic time, absence of flashbacks, and conscious extension of current happenings to the anticipated future of the Communist takeover in 1949, when the film ends (67-68). Like *Crows and Sparrows*, *The New Year's Sacrifice* follows a strictly chronological diegetic time, except that the narrator's voice in the opening and ending of the film retrospectively places the events in a bygone feudal temporality, therefore propelling history forward.

Unlike the literary text that begins with the narrator's direct confrontation with the miserable Xianglin Sao, who asks him whether Hell exists or not, the film adaptation begins with a voice-over narration that explicitly addresses the audience. The film begins with the omniscient voice of History that passionately declares: "This story happened some forty years ago when the 1911 Revolution took place, a time absent in the memories of the young." Whereas Lu Xun's narrator speaks *of* and *with* Xianglin Sao's story through dialogization (hence his simultaneous involvement with and evasion of Xianglin Sao's tragedy, and the resulting ironic and ambivalent stance), the film narrator is oriented *to* Xianglin Sao from an external, neutral and objective position in the omniscient voice of History.

Following classical Hollywood narration, the opening of the film adaptation presents the distinct image of the young, energetic, and healthy protagonist (Figure 31). The film ensues with a straightforward and chronological exposition (*cheng*) of Xianglin Sao's kidnapping, second marriage and downfall (*zhuan*). The miserable figure of Xianglin Sao is only depicted at the end of the film as she faces the camera, asking whether or not Hell exists (Figure 32-33). The narrator's evasion of Xianglin Sao's question—"can't say for sure" (*shuobuqing*)—in Lu Xun's text is completely removed and replaced by the sympathetic voice of the filmic narrator, who mourns and extols:

“Xianglin Sao, honest and hardworking, after much suffering and humiliation, fell over and died miserably.” The film narrator then celebrates: “This happened over forty years ago. It happened long ago. We should be happy that times like that are gone for good! Such things have gone forever!” The voice over-narration adds a positive tone to the otherwise tragic story, and ends the film with a high degree of narrative resolution (*he*).

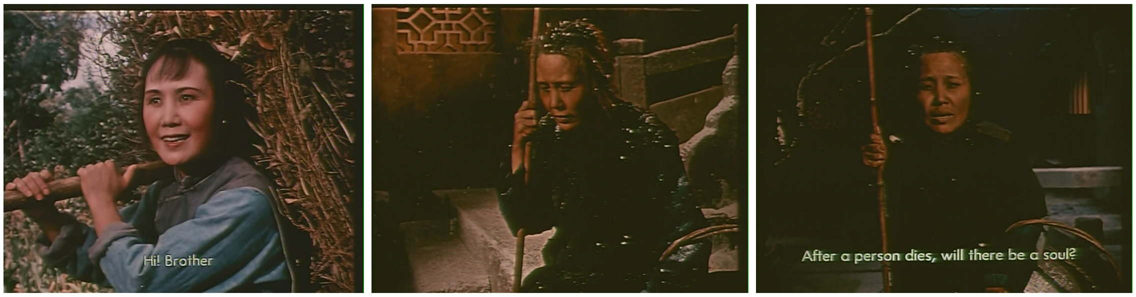
Hi! Brother
After a person dies, will there be a soul?

Figure 31-33: Xianglin Sao.

The voice of History in the film adaptation, by declaring “such things have gone forever,” takes the spectators from one moral order (the feudal and pre-revolutionary one) to another by a leap of faith to the revolutionary present and implicitly the utopian future. In line with Mao’s formulation of revolutionary art, the authoritative voice of the film narrator transforms failure and negativity in Lu Xun’s text into positivity. It propels history forward by reconstituting the feudal past as a forever bygone temporality. As Smith suggests: “we make texts timeless by suppressing their temporality” (50). It is perhaps more proper to say that we make texts timeless by rewriting and reconstituting their temporality. By changing the literary mode of narration into a cinematic mode of direct address to the audience, the film adaptation, with a new sense of optimism, overcomes the limits of Lu Xun’s original narration and rewrites it as a work of revolutionary realism.

Attraction and Seduction: Heterosexual Romance as Enticement

The film adaptation transforms the textuality of the original literary text into a new sensuality made possible by the filmic medium. I argue that the film adaptation, by indulging spectators in heterosexual romance typical of classical Hollywood narrative film, creates visual pleasure and takes on an entirely new entertainment value that is otherwise absent in the original literary text.

A few words on the status of Hollywood cinema in Chinese film history are necessary. Early Chinese cinema in the 1910s and 1920s, as a result of Hollywood competition and influence, was largely an entertainment cinema that aimed for profit and did not contain iconoclastic messages as progressive as its May Fourth literary counterparts. It was not until the early 1930s (especially after Japan's occupation of Manchuria in September 1931)—when May Fourth left-wing intellectuals such as Xia Yan, Zheng Boqi, and Tian Han were encouraged to submit screenplays—that Chinese film began to enmesh entertainment with pedagogy. Cinema thus became more nationalistic and "hard" in its message, in opposition to "soft-film" advocates who promoted entertainment films and maintained that "film is ice-cream for the eyes and a sofa for the soul" (Huang Jiamo 252). In that sense, the Chinese film industry in the 1930s creatively transformed the nationalistic and patriotic legacy of the May Fourth literary movement led by the intellectual class into a popular form that combined May Fourth literature, Mandarin Duck and Butterfly popular fiction, and Hollywood conventions. The career of the director Sang Hu represents such a negotiation between different forms, genres and conventions. A fan of Peking opera and domestic film, Sang nonetheless admired Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, and Greta Garbo, and "never missed a film" featuring those stars (*Sang Hu* 4). Sang's collaboration with Zhang Ailing in the making of *Long Live the Wife* (*Taitai wansui*) (1947), as well as his opera film *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* (1953), demonstrates his versatile ability to represent romance and marriage in an entertaining manner on the silver screen. In fact, *The New Year's Sacrifice* is not an exception in representing romantic love in Chinese films of the time, such as *Nie Er* (Zheng Junli, 1958), *Five Golden Flowers* (*Wuduo jinhua*) (Wang Jiayi, 1959), and *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzijun*) (Xie Jin, 1960). *The New Year's Sacrifice* does not speak in a vacuum; it generates a dialogue between revolutionary cinema, May Fourth literature, and Republican era filmmaking, and is part of an ongoing process of adapting Hollywood conventions for the aesthetic and political purposes of Chinese filmmakers and cultural authorities.

The constitution of subjectivity in revolutionary cinema is not a one way interpellation, but is a kind of attraction and seduction that indulges cinematic subjects in visual pleasure. In his writing on desire and pleasure in Chinese revolutionary cinema, Ban Wang highlights the sublimation of romance to higher political goals—the "recycling of the individual's libidinal energy for revolutionary purposes"—as a trope in revolutionary film (124). Wang argues that romance and ideology work hand in hand in revolutionary film to lure spectators into an aestheticized politics. In the following, a close reading of a romantic scene will demonstrate how the film adaptation harnesses classical Hollywood narration and creates visual pleasure by indulging spectators in heterosexual romance, therefore satisfying the entertainment demands of revolutionary cinema.

One of the major enrichments of plot and character development in the film adaptation is the expansion on heterosexual romance and marriage that is a typical narrative trope in classical Hollywood narrative film. Unlike the literary text that tells the story of Xianglin Sao's second marriage with He Laoliu in the voice of Old Mrs. Wei and Xianglin Sao herself, the film renders the performance of He Laoliu on screen, giving him gentle gestures and demeanor and a sympathetic image that is otherwise absent in the literary text. Sang Hu romanticizes He Laoliu as someone who "awakens the love hidden in the soul of Xianglin Sao" ("Zhufu" 129), so much so that the commentary in *Renmin ribao* describes the morning after the blind marriage scene as "the most beautiful and touching scene" that portrays He Laoliu's "love, sympathy and intimate concern for Xianglin Sao" (Jin). While some critics at the time argued that the film adaptation "destroyed the realism" of the original short story as He Laoliu's character had been "distorted" into a romantic and "gentlemanly" character, Li Chenglie argued otherwise and asked rhetorically: "why isn't love permitted among villagers and manual laborers?" (151). Such a debate reveals the adaptability of the term "realism" and the ways in which the film adaptation transgresses the limits of the original by rewriting Xianglin Sao's second marriage for entertainment purposes.

He Laoliu's visual presence is significant, for a male figure not only fulfills the entertainment demands of a heterosexual romance typical of classical Hollywood narrative film, but also makes Xianglin Sao's tragedy as the victimized widow of a patriarchal and feudal society possible. He Laoliu is a crucial figure in the film's moral universe without whom the tragedy of Xianglin Sao cannot be "accomplished." The romance between Xianglin Sao and He Laoliu is depicted in great subtlety with minimal ornamentation and is immediately sublimated to higher narrative motives. The best example is the scene when the injured and weak Xianglin Sao, at the sight of He Laoliu, who gently and sympathetically offers her a bowl of water, changes from hostility to appreciation with “a hidden love awakening in her soul,” as Sang Hu puts it (“Zhufu” 129) (Figure 34).

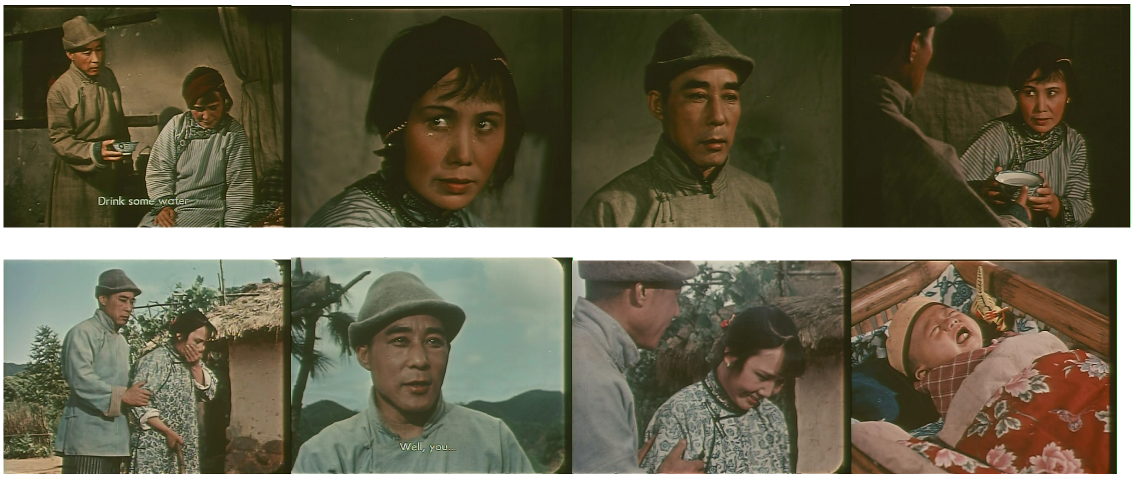

Figure 34: Just enough romantic enticement in *The New Year’s Sacrifice* (1956).

The transition is conveyed through a series of shot-reverse-shots and close-ups, both of which are typical Hollywood editing techniques to convey romance. Immediately following that sequence in which the seed of love is sown is a sequence that conveys Xianglin Sao’s pregnancy with extreme subtlety. In the first shot, the couple’s manual labor is depicted in a shining and positive light. As Xianglin Sao is about to throw up, the camera cuts to the troubled He Laoliu who hesitates, slowly “gets it” and says with a joyful smile: “well . . . you. . . .” The camera then cuts to Xianglin Sao with an embarrassed yet joyful smile. Immediately following that shot is a baby crying. Together with the previous sequence, the whole transition from Xianglin Sao’s hostility to her awakened love consummated in the establishment of a family is conveyed in just eight shots with elliptical editing. Here, Hollywood conventions of heterosexual romance and "invisible" continuity editing are creatively adapted by the director in ways that provide "just enough" romantic enticement for the spectators, thereby serving the entertainment demands of revolutionary cinema without a wholesale submission to Hollywood romance.[23]

Orchestrating Cinematic Tempo: the Melodramatic Mode of Pathos and Action

The film adaptation creates melodramatic moments to accentuate class conflicts and stir spectators into pathos, therefore creating a moral universe of victims and villains. My objective of using the term "melodramatic" is not so much to apply a narrative mode that originated in the context of the French Revolution and its aftermath as a straightjacket on Chinese revolutionary cinema. Rather, I apply the term "melodramatic" as a broadly conceived mode that accommodates a heterogeneity of local expressions. I want to look at the ways in which film, which came to China as a foreign form (with especially Hollywood cinema as the dominant cultural form in the name of the "global") and began as what Miriam Hansen calls "vernacular modernism" during the Republican era, was domesticated to serve the ideological and entertainment needs of Chinese filmmakers, cultural authorities, and the audience during the Communist era (341-342).[24]

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[23] Sang Hu recalled that at the time, he was quite proud of the tight editing of that specific sequence. However, when he watched the film once again in 1978, Sang Hu felt uncomfortable watching the sequence, which he described as "artificial" (*Sang Hu* 239). I suggest that the "artificiality," conceived retrospectively by the director (and possibly by us), emerges not so much from the director's immature editing skills, but from the different expectations of how much romantic enticement is permissible on screen in different ideological systems. I argue that in an era when Hollywood film and overt depiction of romance were officially denounced, the Hollywood convention of portraying romantic love was on the contrary creatively mobilized in Chinese revolutionary films of the time.

Recent re-evaluation of melodrama as a cinematic mode removes the pejorative connotations usually associated with melodrama—moral polarization and strong emotionalism—and recuperates it as a "perpetually modernizing form," "an evolving mode of storytelling crucial to the establishment of moral good" and a fundamental mode in mainstream cinema rather than a genre opposed to the norms of the "classical" or the norms of "realism" (Williams 12). Linda Williams goes so far as to suggest that "melodrama borrows from realism but realism serves the melodrama of pathos and action" (38). I argue that the film adaptation of Lu Xun's short story was accomplished by way of melodrama, which facilitates spectatorial identification, and therefore heightens the affective effects of revolutionary realism.

The melodramatic mode, which serves to locate and to articulate what Peter Brooks calls "the moral occult"—"the domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality," lends itself to revolutionary realism in the filmic medium (5). Melodrama, as Brooks defines it, refers to a high dramatization of social existence that stirs spectators into pathos so as to unveil the realm of latent moral meanings. Moral polarization and indulgence in strong emotionalism are the means by which dramatization of social existence is heightened, so that the moral occult masked by the surface of reality can be unveiled to reveal the realm of spiritual reality and latent moral meanings. The melodramatic mode in cinema, as

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[24] Miriam Hansen uses the term "vernacular modernism" to highlight the "diversity of ways in which cinema was translated and reconfigured in local and translocal contexts of reception" (341-42). According to Hansen, film as vernacular modernism, as opposed to high modernism, offered a "sensory reflexive horizon"—an alternative public sphere that "engaged the contradictions of modernity at the level of the senses"—and constituted new subjects and subjectivities.

Thomas Elsaesser describes, can be considered “a system of punctuation” that orchestrates emotional ups and downs, giving expressive colors to the story line (50). Both Elsaesser and Williams maintain that the melodramatic mode effectively renders patterns of social existence—domination, exploitation, morality, gender and class consciousness—in compelling visual forms of pathos and action, and makes them performable in moving pictures through a system of gesture, demeanor, and musical accompaniment.

In the context of Chinese revolutionary cinema, the melodramatic mode is put into use to create a moral anchor. In his talks at Yan’an, Mao asserts that “life as reflected in works of literature and art can and ought to be on a higher plane, more intense, more concentrated and more typical” (470). Melodrama, as a cinematic mode that dramatizes social existence and intensifies emotions so as to unveil latent moral meanings, serves as a highly malleable mode for the rhetorical demands of revolutionary aesthetics that exposes class enemies, extols revolutionary struggle, and propels history forward and upward to a higher moral plane. In the melodramatic mode of storytelling in the filmic medium, the moral universe of *The New Year’s Sacrifice* takes on entirely new meanings and significance. In the following, I offer a close reading of three melodramatic scenes in the film adaptation. Those melodramatic moments are crucial in stirring the spectators into pathos in the moral universe established by the film.

The refashioned romance between Xianglin Sao and He Laoliu is conveyed mainly through elliptical editing, and it serves a higher melodramatic motif that dramatizes the tragic turn (*zhuan*) of the narrative: the parallel deaths of Xianglin Sao’s husband and son. In the film adaptation, the deaths of Xianglin Sao's husband and son occur almost simultaneously after the debt collector threatens to take their house, pushing Xianglin Sao's misery to the extreme in one of the most melodramatic moments of the film that is absent in the literary text. The intrusion of the debt collector functions not only to introduce the type of unambiguous class enemy typical of revolutionary realism, but also to provide a deadline typical of classical Hollywood narrative cinema so as to create suspense and a sense of urgency. As the sick He Laoliu struggles in his bed, the off-screen but diegetic voice "there are wolves" triggers a series of melodramatic moments that culminate in the death of Xianglin Sao's son, Ah Mao, who is eaten by the wolves.

The frequent frontal close-ups of Xianglin Sao at different camera angles during the search for her son in the deep forest, together with the audio renderings of echoes and wind that envelope the scene, not only agitate the spectators but also literally enlarge and intensify the actress Bai Yang's facial expressions and "interior performance" (*neixin biaoyan*), a term that had been established as an equivalent to "facial performance" (*mianbu biaoyan*) by film critics such as Feng Xizui (914-915). In the 1920s, filmmakers abandoned the more traditional and exaggerative style of *xinju* (new drama) acting in favor of a more naturalistic and realistic style of acting as a result of Hollywood influence and more specifically D. W. Griffith's convention of the close-up that visually enlarges facial expressions in unprecedented and "realistic" ways. Commenting on her own acting in the film, Bai Yang says that since Xianglin Sao is a reticent woman, she conveyed Xianglin Sao's emotions through the eyes rather than verbal language (18). Similarly, Sang Hu speaks of strengthening the image (*xingxianggan*) and action (*dongzuoxing*) of his characters especially when the characters are not speaking (*Sang Hu* 160). The series of close-ups, in that sense, are particularly suited for capturing facial and emotional performance, and are harnessed by the director to create melodramatic moments.

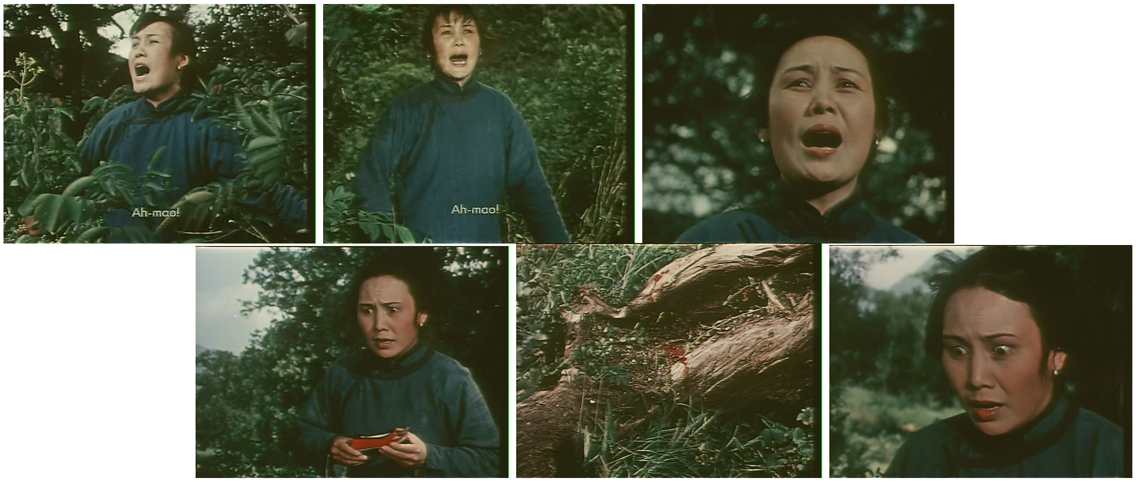
Ah-mao!
Ah-mao!

Figure 35: Xianglin Sao's shocked face.

The aforementioned scene culminates in three consecutive and highly melodramatic shots: (1) a medium shot of Xianglin Sao holding Ah Mao's shoes; (2) a close-up of bloodstains in the woods; (3) a close-up of Xianglin Sao's shocked face, accompanied by extra-diegetic instrumental sounds that dramatize the shock (Figure 35). Here, the sophisticated use of the close-up, sound recording and naturalistic color photography, in addition to Bai Yang's facial and emotional performance, gives the film a compelling visual and emotional force that stirs spectators into pathos. It is also notable that prior to filming, Bai Yang humbled herself, listened to the stories of the women in the village and learned how to carry heavy loads in order to imagine and situate herself in the life of Xianglin Sao. Bai recalls that learning from the women of the working class, in addition to her childhood experience of living as an orphan in her nanny's house, informed her acting. She describes the key of acting as "merging with the character in the illusionary realm as if the illusionary realm is becoming the realm of the 'real'" (Bai 19-20). Bai's learning from the masses that informed her facial and emotional performance is accentuated by the close-ups, the extradiegetic music, and the naturalistic color photography, all of which give the film both a realistic and a melodramatic quality for the purpose of creating Xianglin Sao as the filmic icon of a victimized woman in the feudal and pre-revolutionary society.

One of the ways in which the film adaptation of "The New Year's Sacrifice" rewrites the original literary text is the gradual accentuation of Xianglin Sao's plight by rendering it as simultaneous or multiple shocks succeeding one after another in the melodramatic mode. Theorists of early film melodrama such as Peter Singer point to the use of unlikely coincidence as a hallmark of the melodramatic mode. Unlike the literary text, where the death of Xianglin Sao's husband and son do not occur simultaneously, the film creates a parallel death for melodramatic effects. After the shocking death of her son, Xianglin Sao returns to her house, only to discover that her husband is dead too. Xianglin Sao's sight of her husband's corpse is once again accompanied by extra-diegetic instrumental sounds that dramatize the shock. As the Chinese saying goes, "disaster never comes alone"; the death of the patriarchal figure and the son leaves Xianglin Sao completely outside of the societal structure once again as a widow without a husband and without a son.

The melodramatic renderings of the original literary text are manifested in two other key scenes, both of which, like the aforementioned scene, accentuate Xianglin Sao's plight by creating multiple shocks. Unlike the literary text, which does not depict the specific circumstances under which Xianglin Sao is kicked out by the Lu family, the film adaptation creates a specific and dramatic circumstance under which Xianglin Sao is kicked out of the house in another melodramatic moment in the film. In the film adaptation, Xianglin Sao is fired by the Lu family during the New Year preparation after she lays her hands on the ancestral offerings. Xianglin Sao immediately drops the fish the moment Master Lu shouts: "It is no use for you even to donate one hundred strings [to the local temple]! You will never redeem your sin!" (Xianglin Sao had donated a year's salary to build a threshold in the temple, in the hope that by letting everyone in the community trample on her, she can redeem her sin of being a widow who brings disasters).

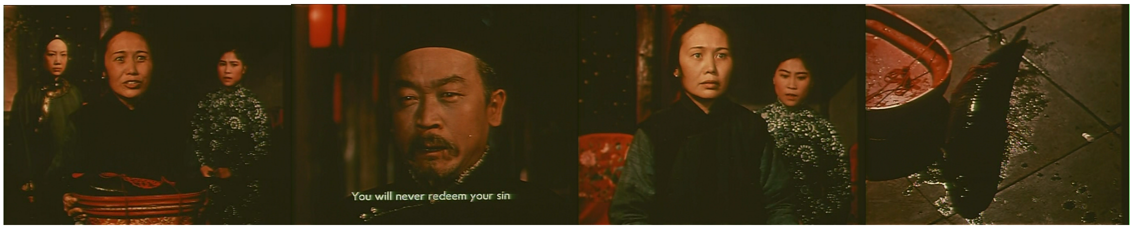
You will never redeem your sin

Figure 36: "You will never redeem your sin!"

The scene is rendered in a close-up of Master Lu as he shouts at Xianglin Sao. The camera then cuts to a medium shot of Xianglin Sao's colorless face, succeeded by a close-up of the fish whose belly turns upwards (as a sign of death) after Xianglin Sao drops it on the floor (Figure 36). The fish used for the ancestral offering, like Ah Mao's shoe that functions as a moral anchor and a reminder of Xianglin Sao's plight, appears five times during the New Year celebrations in the film. The fish functions not only as a narrative trope that recalls the good old days when Xianglin Sao could take part in the New Year preparation, but also as a marker of Xianglin Sao's downfall each time it reappears.

Most importantly, each of the downfalls and each of the shocks are reflected in Xianglin Sao's eyes in Bai Yang's performance as registered by the filmic medium. In "On Interior Performance," Feng Xizui had written that interior performance requires actors to capture different levels and layers of emotions: "Even a single expression has the distinction between lightness and heaviness, and slowness and swiftness—only then can different levels of interior performance develop gradually and appropriately" (914-915). In her performance, Bai Yang leaves room for different levels and layers of emotion so that each shock produces effects that are different from previous shocks. For instance, the moment Master Lu shouts, "you will never redeem your sin," Xianglin Sao becomes dumb and motionless since she is hopeless after the multiple shocks and failure. Therefore, her hands drop. As a woman who has been widowed twice, Xianglin Sao is considered by the ancestors, the Lu family, and the society at large as a sinful and unclean woman who brings disaster.

Controversy of Xianglin Sao's Resistance

Immediately succeeding the aforementioned scene is the most controversial scene, open to various claims of "realism," leading to a debate on the interpretation of Xianglin Sao's character at the time. While Xianglin Sao's character type is unquestionably a victimized woman in the feudal and pre-revolutionary society, the subtleties of her character take on new interpretations with regard to her resistance and rebellion in the film adaptation. This is a case where the addition of small details results in a tension between fidelity to the original and recreation of the original.

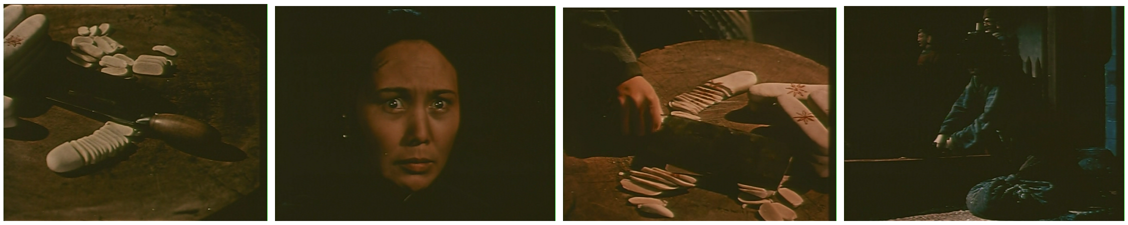

Figure 37: “Can’t even the Buddha save me?”

After being fired by Master Lu, the hopeless Xianglin Sao is depicted alone in the kitchen where she questions with tremendous doubt: “Can’t even the Buddha save me?” The film then cuts to a close-up of a chopping knife on the chopping board, followed by a close-up of Xianglin Sao’s facial expression that switches from doubt to resolution. Succeeding this is another close-up of Xianglin Sao’s hand holding the chopping knife firmly. Immediately after this shot, we see Xianglin Sao violently and repeatedly striking the threshold in the temple in a frenzy with the chopping knife (Figure 37). These four shots forcefully punctuate and orchestrate the melodramatic shock and the emotional climax of Xianglin Sao’s tragedy by emphasizing Xianglin Sao’s immediate transition from hopelessness and doubt to her resolute revenge when she sees the chopping knife lying in front of her.

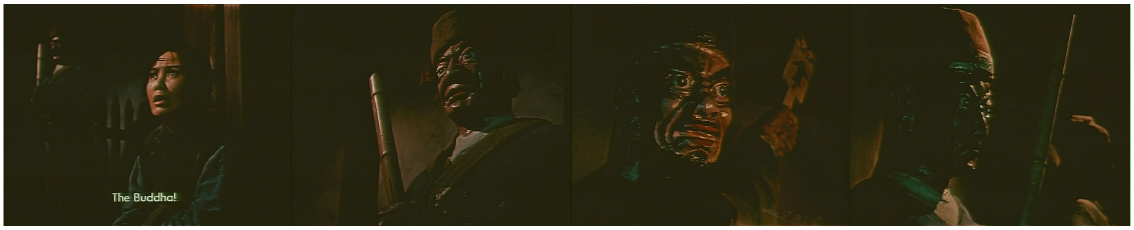

Figure 38: Xianglin Sao striking the threshold in the temple.

When the caretaker of the temple tries to stop Xianglin Sao by saying “how could you provoke the Buddha,” Xianglin Sao is portrayed in a low-angle medium shot as she says “the Buddha!” The shot is then dramatically and rhythmically intercut with three low angle close-up shots of the gods in the temple, once again accompanied by dramatic extra-diegetic instrumental sounds (Figure 38). These shots emphasize the superstitious practices that permeate society, depicting Xianglin Sao as a victim of the feudal society.

The scene at the threshold of the temple is absent in the original literary text, and was instead added on the spur of the moment by *yueju* director Nan Wei for the *yueju* film *Xianglin Sao* (1948). Yuan Xuefen (the *yueju* actress playing Xianglin Sao) agreed at the time for the sake of “letting spectators air their frustrations”—a decision about which Yuan was however hesitant, as she later recalled, for she felt that the addition of that scene made the film *Xianglin Sao* “superficial in terms of its message” (107). Xia Yan recalls that every time he watched the scene, he was stirred and did not feel that anything was awkward or out of sync with Xianglin Sao’s character (“Zatan gaibian” 120). As a result, Xia Yan retained that scene in the script he wrote for the 1956 film adaptation of “The New Year’s Sacrifice.” After the release of the film, film critic Lin Zhihao described the scene at the threshold as “unrealistic,” for it implies “a break with religious authority”—a break with an ideology that has thousands of years of history (160). Lin asserted that the scene violates the development of Xianglin Sao’s character and that her break with religious authority is inconsistent with her question about the existence of the soul after death in the end. In response to such a criticism that described the addition of the scene as a result of political consideration at the cost of realism, Xia Yan, quoting Lu Xun's original text, argued that Xianglin Sao is a character of strong resistance despite her apparently weak and superstitious character:

> But Xianglin Sao is *quite a character* (*chuge*). . . . We go-betweens, madam, see a great deal. When widows remarry, some cry and shout, some threaten to commit suicide, some won't go through the ceremony after they have been carried to the man's house, and some even smash the wedding candlesticks. But Xianglin Sao was *extraordinary* (*yihu xunchang*). (Xia, "Zatan gaibian" 121) (Lu Hsun 135, with my modifications)

In a similar fashion, film critic Li Chenglie argued that Xianglin Sao is a character of strong resistance, as seen from her early escape and later resistance to the second marriage. Li went so far as to suggest that Xianglin Sao's chopping of the threshold is a continuation of that resistance (Li Chenglie 150). Xia Yan, on the other hand, described Xianglin Sao's action as an "emotional explosion out of extreme disappointment and pain," and an emotional explosion is not the same as a rational awakening comparable to a break with religious authority as some suggested ("Zatan gaibian" 120-121). In line with that argument, Bai Yang later described Xianglin Sao as a complex character who seems weak but strong, evidenced by her early escape and resistance to her second marriage. Master Lu's words "you will never redeem your sin" shatter her spiritual pillar, and chopping the threshold, as Bai Yang put it, "is an impulsive act rather than a rational enlightenment" (12).

While the term “realism” was evoked and defended for different purposes by both sides in the debate, each of which claimed fidelity to the original, one thing for certain is that the subtleties of Xianglin Sao’s character take on new interpretive possibilities in the filmic text as a result of the melodramatic shocks the film registers. Whether Xianglin Sao is a character of strong resistance or not is of secondary importance; what is more important is the way the film activates anger and frustration, and stirs spectators into pathos through a system of punctuation that orchestrates melodramatic performance and shocks, producing effects that are unique to the filmic medium and are otherwise absent in the literary text. The melodramatic moments created by cinema effectively expose the sinister faces of the villains, underneath the intellect and propriety the Lu family exudes, and highlight the superstitious practices that permeate society, therefore rendering Xianglin Sao as a moral scapegoat of a feudal, superstitious, and patriarchal society. By doing that, the film adaptation situates characters along class types, accentuates class conflicts, and blatantly exposes the dark forces of society in a way that is absent in the original literary text. The original story acquires new sensuality and rhetoricity as a work of revolutionary realism and is made melodramatic, visually pleasurable, entertaining, and pedagogical in the filmic medium.

Through re-narrativization in accordance with classical Hollywood narration and the addition of heterosexual romance and melodramatic moments, the film adaptation eliminates the ambivalence, negativity and failure that lie at the heart of Lu Xun’s critical and social realism. To go back to the commentary in *Renmin ribao*, what is considered as “retaining fidelity to the original” is actually a significant rewriting and even transgression of the original. The ambivalence, complexity, and self-reflexive quality specific to the original literary text are lost in transferal to a different semiotic and ideological system, while a new positivity, sensuality, and rhetoricity specific to the filmic text is gained. In the name of fidelity to the original, the film adaptation actually displaces the literary conventions of the original and rewrites the text as revolutionary realism in the filmic medium, elevating Lu Xun as a revolutionary writer and refining the character Xianglin Sao as a prototype in pre-revolutionary society.

Conclusion: *The Lin Family Shop* (1959)

In my analyses of the film adaptations *This Life of Mine* (1950), *Corrosion* (1950), and *The New Year's Sacrifice* (1956), I highlight the convergence of May Fourth literary conventions and classical Hollywood narration, including the addition to canonical May Fourth texts of heterosexual romance and melodramatic moments, which enhance cinematic pleasure and ideological messaging in the film adaptations. As a concluding remark, I will say a few words about *The Lin Family Shop* (*Linjia puzi*) (Shui Hua, 1959), a film adaptation of Mao Dun's original novel published in 1932, in order to tie together the four examples in this chapter and suggest an alternative way to assess communist film adaptations that are conventionally viewed as propagandistic and dogmatic, especially when compared to the original literary texts.

The Lin Family Shop depicts the oppression of imperialism, feudalism, and comprador-capitalism in a society where "the big fish eats the small fish, and the small fish eats the shrimps" in 1931. Following classical Hollywood narration, *The Lin Family Shop* uses deadlines to structure the temporal progression and culmination of class conflicts between the small and big businessmen. *The Lin Family Shop*, like other earlier film adaptations of May Fourth literature, begins with a voice-over narration that tells a summary of the story (Figure 39). The film ensues with the protagonist Mr. Lin's (the small fish) struggle to maintain his business, as he delays payment to his creditors (the big fish) again and again. The turning point of the narrative comes when the corrupted official lays his eyes on Mr. Lin's daughter as a potential concubine. Mr. Lin refuses to marry his daughter off as a concubine. As a result, Mr. Lin's business as well as his safety is threatened. The film ends with the culmination of class conflict: Mr. Lin and his daughter leave town, leaving a widow (the shrimp) in desperation. Throughout the film, deadlines (when payments are due) propel the narrative forward and create a sense of crisis and urgency, which facilitates diegetic absorption.

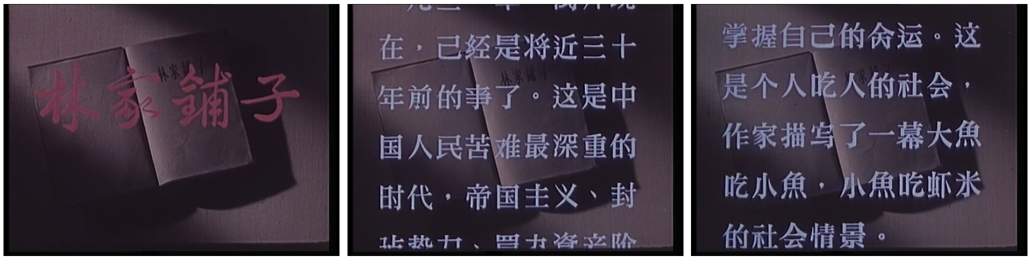

Figure 39: Voice-over narration in the opening of *The Lin Family Shop* (1959).

In his analysis of *The Lin Family Shop*, Stephen Teo suggests that "the style and content of *The Lin Family Shop* is redolent of the social melodramas of the 1930s—the so-called 'progressive' films produced between 1932 and 1937 in Shanghai." Indeed, like other earlier film adaptations, *The Lin Family Shop* registers melodramatic shocks and moral polarization through the use of superimposition. For instance, as Mr. Lin walks hopelessly because he is unable to meet the deadlines and repay the debt to his creditors, various images of his creditors are superimposed on the image of Mr. Lin in medium and long shots in succession after one another (Figure 40). The final moments of the film create a sense of chaos as the widow (Mr. Lin's creditor) desperately knocks on the door of the Lin Family Shop, whose goods are to be confiscated by the big businessmen and the bankers. The series of shots from the widow with her child to her mother and the crowd depict vividly the chain of effects that Mr. Lin's escape has set off: "the big fish eats the small fish, and the small fish eats the shrimps" (Figure 41). The use of deadlines typical of classical Hollywood narration, class conflicts, and moral polarization in the film adaptation create melodramatic effects that are pleasurable and pedagogical.

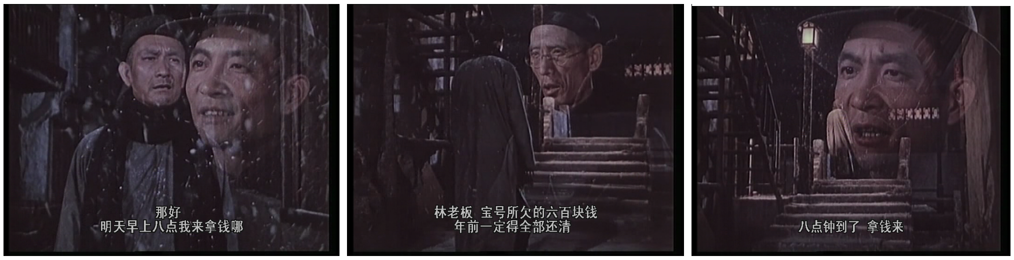
那好
明天早上八点我来拿钱哪
林老板 宝号所欠的六百块钱
年前一定得全部还清
八点钟到了 拿钱来

Figure 40: Superimposition is used to antagonize the small and big businessmen, as well as to generate melodramatic shocks.

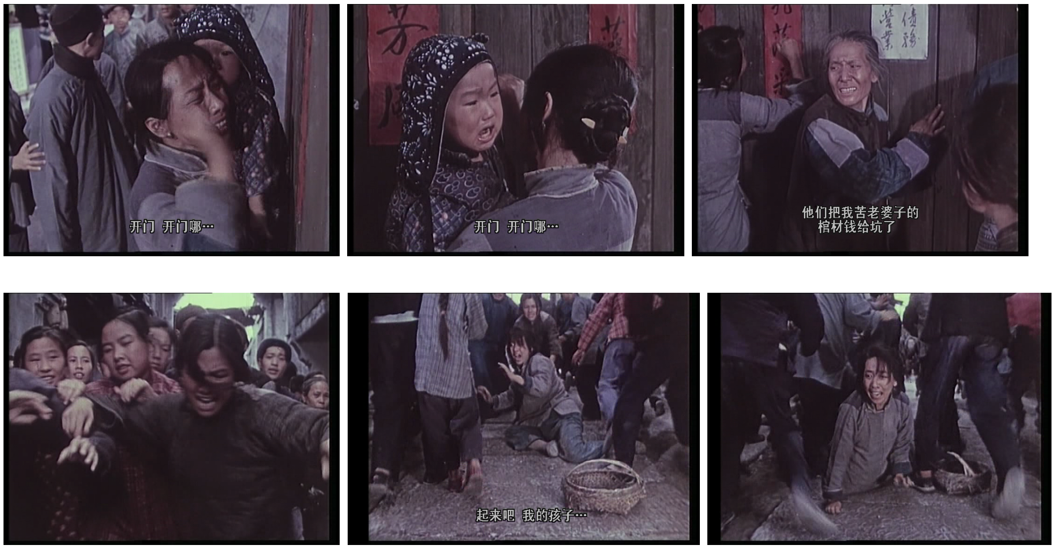
开门 开门哪…
开门 开门哪…
他们把我苦老婆子的
棺材钱给坑了
起来吧 我的孩子…

Figure 41: The culmination of melodramatic shocks, chaos, and urgency in the ending of *The Lin Family Shop*.

In my analyses of film adaptations of May Fourth literature that were made in the 1950s—*This Life of Mine*, *Corrosion*, *The New Year's Sacrifice*, and *The Lin Family Shop*, I view the film adaptations in the context of the Chinese literary tradition, classical Hollywood narration, as well as the rich legacy of Republican-era filmmaking, including social melodrama and romantic comedy. The transformation of May Fourth literary conventions into classical Hollywood narration, combined with the addition of heterosexual romance and melodramatic moments, facilitates diegetic absorption and identification with the protagonists (although none of them are revolutionary in the strict sense)—elements that are central to the cinematic pleasure and ideological messaging of the film adaptations. In the next chapter, I will switch my focus from screenwriting and classical Hollywood narration to cinematography. The next chapter looks at the translation of Soviet montage in film discourse of communist China, as well as how the cinematic technique of montage was reinvented by Chinese filmmakers to engineer climactic moments in Chinese revolutionary films.

Chapter 3

Translating "Montage":

The Discreet Attractions of Soviet Montage for Chinese Revolutionary Cinema

What happens when a film term such as "montage" undergoes translation and crosses the boundary to another cinematic system in a different temporal and spatial context? What kind of transformations, both linguistic and cinematic, does it undergo? In this chapter, I look at the theoretical permutations of "montage" as it was translated and introduced into China beginning in the early 1930s and the resulting film practices as the term continued to be re-read, redefined, and reinvented during the communist era. As a result of the attraction to the revolutionary allure of Soviet montage in the 1930s, a mysterious aura was attached to the Chinese transliteration *mengtaiqi* (蒙太奇), which literally means "veil (is) too strange." In a period of intense engagement with international film theory during the "Seventeen Years" (1949-1966), Chinese filmmakers demystified the inscrutability of montage in an effort to broaden its scope to refer to all film editing methods, including Hollywood continuity editing and Soviet montage. Through close reading of selected films, I look at how montage was creatively reinvented to construct a collectivized subject cinematically.

Chinese revolutionary cinema during the Seventeen Years is a highly entertaining and political cinema that radically constructs a mass spectatorship and reformulates cinematic pleasure. In her study of the opera film debates in the 1950s and the early 1960s, Weihong Bao describes the period as "unparalleled": "Few moments in the history of Chinese film criticism have been so intensely focused on questions of form and medium" (256). As Bao rightly points out, the 1950s witnessed the ascending prominence of Soviet montage theory and several major publications on film theory. This chapter creates a dialogue with international film theory by tracing the introduction and Chinese translation of the term "montage" in the 1930s, and the reinvention of the term both in critical discourses and in film practices during the Seventeen Years. In doing so, I account for the discreet attractions of Soviet montage for Chinese revolutionary cinema—attractions that were reinvented for cinematic pleasure in the hands of Chinese filmmakers.[25] The kind of attractions that montage generates in Chinese revolutionary cinema are visual, aural, kinesthetic, political, and even erotic, with a larger spectatorial implication different from that of the "montage of attractions" (монтаж аттракционов) formulated by Sergei Eisenstein and "cinema of attractions" suggested by Tom Gunning in his writings on early cinema.

Central to cinematic pleasure in Chinese revolutionary cinema is the construction of a collectivized subject, often achieved through montage that orchestrates climactic moments. While Stephanie Hemelryk Donald (2000) and Ban Wang (1997) suggest, respectively, the creation of the "socialist realist gaze" and the sublimation of private desire as ways of understanding how a collective subject is constructed cinematically, not much has been said about film method per se.[26] Jason McGrath (2009) supplements the sublimation thesis by looking at how genre conventions of classical Hollywood heteronormative romance (visual elements of the *mise-en-scène*, the use of shot/reverse-shot editing, close-ups, and non-verbal performance cues) are deployed to facilitate sublimation. While fiction films during the Seventeen Years mostly follow classical Hollywood narration, they are also filled with "rhetorical flourishes reminiscent of early Soviet montage," as McGrath aptly points out ("Communists"). Pleasurable moments in Chinese revolutionary films are often conveyed by montage that evokes the memory and romance of revolution by putting together images from different times and places. Those rhetorical flourishes are a result of Chinese filmmakers' longstanding effort in experimenting with and perfecting the use of montage beginning in the 1930s.

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[25] The umbrella term "Soviet montage" is generally used to refer to the wave of experimentation with film method that flourished in Soviet Russia in the 1920s. This essay primarily deals with the ways in which two towering figures of Soviet montage—Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin—were received and read in communist China. Rather than discounting the revolutionary allure of the two Soviet directors, this essay looks at how Eisenstein's and Pudovkin's different formulations of montage gained an authoritative voice in communist China through the work of translation, at a time when ideas branded as "Soviet style" were eagerly received, sometimes with additional ideological modifications according to the needs of the time.

This chapter locates two significant moments in the translation of "montage." First, a mysterious aura was attached to the Chinese transliteration *mengtaiqi* (蒙太奇), which literally means "veil (is) too strange," as a result of the attraction to the revolutionary aura of Soviet montage as a formal experiment in the 1930s. Second, in line with the communist goals of simplification and popularization after 1949, Chinese filmmakers debunked the mystery of montage in an effort to broaden its scope to refer to *all* film editing methods, including Hollywood continuity editing and Soviet montage. Such a discursive move allowed Chinese revolutionary cinema to implicitly accept, aspire to, and traverse both Hollywood continuity editing and Soviet montage without openly capitulating to the ideological enemies those systems might have signified politically.

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[26] See Stephanie Hemelryk Donald (2000) and Ban Wang (1997). While there has been an effort (Berry 2004: 43–50; Chi 2008: 192; Ma 1989: 24–25; Pang 2002: 144–50; Zhang Zhen 2005: 249–84) to highlight the innovative use of montage in Chinese films such as *The New Woman* (*Xin nüxing*) (Cai Chusheng, 1934), *Street Angel* (*Malu tianshi*) (Yuan Muzhi, 1937), *The Unfailing Beam* (*Yongbu xiaoshi de dianbo*) (Wang Ping, 1958) and *Stage Sisters* (*Wutai Jiemei*) (Xie Jin, 1965), the discussion about montage in Chinese cinema tends to be brief and deserves more in-depth study, especially with regard to how and why Soviet montage was translated and adapted by Chinese filmmakers.

While Soviet montage was not openly promoted as the Sino-Soviet split emerged in the mid-1950s, its attraction was recreated in a renewed use of montage that combined continuity editing (for chronological development of plot) with Soviet montage, both of which served to attract and provoke spectators at the level of the senses with clarity, simplicity, and forcefulness. In the hands of Chinese filmmakers, montage was taken in a new direction to create a revolutionary aesthetics that renegotiated the position of Chinese cinema vis-à-vis the world.

“Too Strange”: Translating the Riddle of Montage

“Montage” as an imported foreign word, a theoretical notion, and a film method befuddled many in the Chinese film industry, and their befuddlement was manifested in the form of translation. The current widely accepted Chinese translation of the term “montage” is in fact a transliteration (and a creative translation) that approaches the sound of the original—*mengtaiqi* (蒙太奇). Interestingly, the transliteration is a phonetic and semantic pun in Chinese. The first character *meng* (蒙) literally means “veiled” or “clouded,” whereas the second and the third characters *tai-qi* (太奇) mean “too strange,” “too extraordinary,” or “too marvelous.” In other words, the transliteration creates a new meaning in the target language that is otherwise absent in the French original—“veil (is) too strange"—with a mysterious aura and an alluring sound attached to it.[27]

Who coined the term with such creativity and mischievousness? Going through the origins of the translated term is like entering a riddle, as it is not entirely clear who first translated the term "montage" into Chinese. Even Cheng Bugao, one of China's first directors, cannot recall the origins of the translated term in his memoirs. Cheng describes himself as one among the many directors who used to consider montage "magical" (*shenqi*) (Cheng Bugao, *Yingtan* 161). Cheng describes montage as a "riddle" and an "unsolved mystery," for which "no one could give a simple and clear definition" (Cheng Bugao, *Yingtan* 161).

A look at the left-wing dramatist and director Hong Shen's *A Dictionary of Film Terms* (*Dianying shuyu cidian*) (1935), China's first such specialized dictionary, gives us a few clues to the way "montage" acquired its strangeness as a result of translation (Figure 42). The size of a coffee table book, the dictionary succinctly provides definitions of over seven hundred foreign film terms in Chinese, with a separate English and Chinese index at the end. Foreign (mostly English) film terms ranging from "movie" (*huodong yingpian*) to "dolly shot" (*tuila jingtou*) and "close-up" (*texie*) are translated into Chinese, with the English original placed right next to the Chinese translations. The French term *montage* is introduced at the end of chapter 23, "The director." "Montage," conceived as a technique employed at the disposal of the director, is translated as *jiegou* (结构) (structure) and transliterated as *mengdaqi* (蒙达奇) in Chinese:

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[27] The French verb *monter* means "to mount" or "to assemble." As a film term, *montage* means "editing" in the general sense, i.e. how shots are put together to make up a film.

> *Mengdaqi* (蒙达奇) is the transliteration of the French term “*montage*” [original in French]. Translated into English, the word means “mounting” [original in English] or “setting” [original in English]—more or less equivalent to “construction” [original in English]. Hence, it does not hurt to translate it as *jiegou* (结构) (structure). (Hong Shen, *Dianying* 264)

It is notable that the transliteration listed in the dictionary, *mengdaqi* (蒙达奇), phonetically similar to the nowadays widely accepted *mengtaiqi* (蒙太奇), literally means “veiled (to the point of) reaching strange,” carrying the core idea of “strangeness” (*qi*) associated with montage. The transliteration *mengtaiqi* gradually won over the indirect translation *jiegou* (through the mediation of English as the vehicular language) as the established translation of the term “montage”—a victory of phonetic sound over meaning. *Jiegou* (structure), without the appeal of strangeness and an alluring sound, was too mundane to live on as a term.

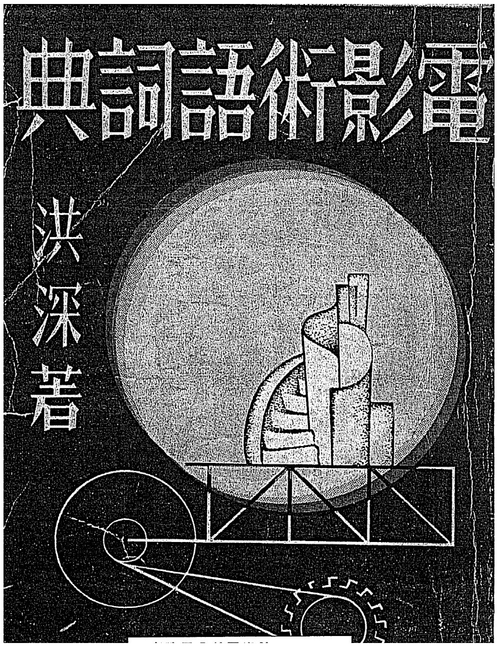

Figure 42: Hong Shen's *A Dictionary of Film Terms* (*Dianying shuyu cidian*) (1935), China's first such specialized dictionary.

When, how, and why did "montage" become inscrutable, strange, and even extraordinary in translation? I suggest that the acquired strangeness and extraordinariness of the term *mengtaiqi* have to do with (1) the foreignness and even untranslatability of "montage" as a newly imported theory and method in China in the early 1930s and (2) Chinese left-wing filmmakers' fascination with the revolutionary promise of Soviet montage as a novel idea and film method.

The foreignness, untranslatability, and lack of a Chinese equivalent to the term "montage" are apparent in the left-wing screenwriters Xia Yan and Zheng Boqi's 1933 translation of Vsevolod Pudovkin's *The Film Director and Film Material* (*Кинорежиссер и киноматериал*) (*Dianying daoyan lun*) (1926) (Figure 43).[28] Xia and Zheng, throughout their entire translation, render the term "montage" in the French original, retaining its foreign flavor and untranslatability. Nothing better accentuates the foreignness, strangeness, and untranslatability of the original term than leaving the foreign letters untranslated.

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[28] Pudovkin's *The Film Director and Film Material* (1926) was translated into German in 1928 and into English by Ivor Montagu in 1929. Pudovkin was the first of the Soviet directors to have his writings translated into English, over a decade before Jay Leyda translated Eisenstein's *The Film Sense*. For more details about Pudovkin as a filmmaker and a theorist, see Richard Taylor's (2006) edition of Pudovkin's essays.

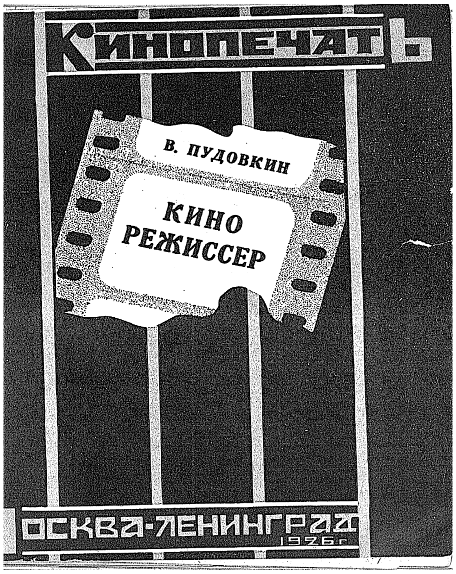

Figure 43: Vsevolod Pudovkin's *The Film Director and Film Material* (*Кинорежиссер и киноматериал*) (1926).

In the translators' hands, the French term "*montage*" is even attached to the Chinese adjectival and adverbial modifier "*dedi*" to become a half-French and half-Chinese neologism "montage-*dedi*" (montage 的地). The newly formed adverb literally embodies the linguistic encounter between languages as well as the encounter between different cinematic systems. In *The Clash of Empire,* Lydia Liu describes translation as a process that takes place in what she calls "the zone of hypothetical equivalence": ". . . one does not translate between equivalents; rather, one creates tropes of equivalence in the middle zone of translation between the host and guest languages. This zone of hypothetical equivalence, which is occupied by neologistic imagination and the super-sign, becomes the very ground for change" (110). Liu highlights the historicity of translation and power inequality that constitute the work of translation. Xia and Zheng were part of a continuous effort in translating foreign film terms that were circulating as cultural currency in the Chinese market since the influx of film technology in semi-colonial Shanghai in the 1910s. Highly conscious of the peripheral position of Chinese cinema in relation to Hollywood cinema after World War I, Xia and Zheng established a discourse on filmmaking by translating Soviet works on montage as a counterforce against the domination of Hollywood cinema.

The enthusiastic subscription to Soviet montage coincided with the left-wing cinema movement, whose representatives perceived Soviet cinema as offering a new path for Chinese cinema. For instance, Xia Yan described Soviet cinema as a "progressive" and "socialist" cinema that pointed China to "the path of realism" (*Xia Yan quanji* 192; vol. 6). Two path-breaking events marked the beginning of Soviet influence on Chinese cinema: *Storm Over Asia* (*Potomok Чингис-хана*) (Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1928) was screened for public viewing in China in 1931, followed by Xia and Zheng's translation of Pudovkin's *The Film Director and Film Material* (1926) two years later.[29] Beginning in 1932, after the restoration of relations between the Nationalist Party and the Soviet Union, there were further efforts to introduce the Chinese audience to Soviet directors such as Eisenstein and Pudovkin. The 1930s also witnessed a surge in film reviews and articles about the attraction of Soviet cinema, its pedagogical value, and cinematic novelty. It is not surprising that under such circumstances, news of Soviet montage as a revolutionary idea and a formal experiment began to circulate widely, with the term gradually acquiring its unusual attractions.

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[29] Various Soviet films and newsreels were introduced into China (especially Harbin) before the public screening of *Storm Over Asia* in 1931. For instance, *Battleship Potemkin* (*Броненосец Потемкин*) (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) was the first Soviet feature film screened in Shanghai in 1925. The semi-private screening was organized by the Soviet embassy as an invitation for the South China Society in Shanghai (see Xia, "Sulian dianying").

From the original “montage” to *mengdaqi* (蒙达奇) and *jiegou* (结构), and eventually the verbal twist to *mengtaiqi* (蒙太奇)—the birth of a new phonetic phrase with a newly acquired strangeness helped set the stage for a number of important cinematic innovations on the part of Chinese left-wing filmmakers beginning in the 1930s, when Soviet montage was received enthusiastically. How did Chinese filmmakers adapt Soviet montage? What kind of domestication was involved?

The Revolutionary Allure of the Soviet Directors: Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin

While “*montage*” means “editing” in the general sense (i.e. how shots are put together to make up a film), Chinese translators, left-wing filmmakers, and critics in the 1930s and 1940s were primarily interested in Soviet montage as a formal experiment in the strict sense. In a series of articles published in the early 1940s, Shen Fengwei, a Chinese film critic, selectively introduced various categories of montage formulated by Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin (Table 1) (“Tan ‘mengtaiqi’” 18-19, “Zaitan ‘mengtaiqi’” 19).

Vsevolod Pudovkin

I. Constructive montage (*jiegouxing mengtaiqi* 结构性蒙太奇)
    a) Montage of a scene (*changjing mengtaiqi* 场景蒙太奇)
    b) Montage of an episode (*duanluo mengtaiqi* 段落蒙太奇)
    c) Montage of a script (*quanju mengtaiqi* 全剧蒙太奇)
II. Comparative montage (*guanxide mengtaiqi* 关系的蒙太奇):
    a) Contrast (*duibifa* 对比法)
    b) Parallel action (*pingxingfa* 平行法)
    c) Simile (*xiangzhengfa* 像征法)
    d) Simultaneity (*tongshi jinxingfa* 同时进行法)
    e) Leitmotif (*chongfu jiazhongfa* 重复加重法)

Sergei Eisenstein
Metric montage (*changduan mengtaiqi* 长短蒙太奇)
Rhythmic montage (*yunlü mengtaiqi* 韵律蒙太奇)
Tonal montage (*gediao mengtaiqi* 格调蒙太奇)
Overtonal montage (*chaogediao mengtaiqi* 超格调蒙太奇)
Intellectual montage (*maodun mengtaiqi* 矛盾蒙太奇)

Table 1: Pudovkin's formulations of montage listed here were later reiterated by Zhang Junxiang in 1959, and then translated into Chinese in a volume of Pudovkin's selected writings published in 1962. Eisenstein's formulations listed here were later translated into Chinese in *Dianying yishu sijiang* (The Film Sense in English) published in 1953, and then included in a volume of Eisenstein's selected writings published in 1962.

Shen yokes together Eisenstein and Pudovkin as representatives of Soviet montage at the expense of further discussion of the disagreements between the two directors:

> We know that montage originated in France, but it is the most developed in Russia. . . . Some people describe montage as "Russian editing style" (*eguoshi jianjie*). Obviously, this description is not correct. Montage is not merely editing. Nevertheless, the term "Russian editing style" draws our attention to Russia and its two directors—Pudovkin and Eisenstein. (Shen, "Tan 'mengtaiqi'" 18)

Shen makes two intentional choices here. First, although *montage*, as a term, is said to have originated in France, Shen associates montage as a specialized film method with Russia, where it blossoms.[30] Second, Eisenstein and Pudovkin are singled out as its representatives. Amy Sargeant suggests two reasons why, despite their differences, Pudovkin and Eisenstein are often brought together under the term “Soviet montage”: (1) Soviet silent films continued to be popular among foreign audiences well into the sound period because of their “revolutionary” aura (Sargeant xiv); and (2) “Although Kuleshov, Pudovkin and Eisenstein elect to practice montage differently, true to type as a Soviet ‘school,’ in the 1920s at least, they agree that editing is the technique by which film distinguishes itself” (Sargeant xxi). The revolutionary aura of Soviet montage—in a formal and a political sense—explains why Eisenstein and Pudovkin were conveniently brought together in the hands of Shen, who selectively introduced montage from the Soviet Union, the birthplace of revolution, to the Chinese public.

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[30] Montage was also associated with photography, but the term "photomontage" was not introduced until after World War I by the German Dadaists (though the method existed as early as the 1860s). The Soviet director Lev Kuleshov was the first person to use the term "montage" in relation to film. In 1916, Kuleshov announced that "the fundamental source of cinematic impact upon the viewer . . . is montage, that is, the alternation of shots" (47-48). In the late 1910s, Kuleshov carried out a series of experiments (known as the "Kuleshov experiments") and concluded that "the basic strength of cinema lies in montage,

Shen plays a role similar to translators such as Xia and Zheng, who disseminated canonical film writings from one cinematic system to another. André Lefevere puts forward the important role of “refraction” in the dissemination of a canon in the literary system: “A writer’s work gains exposure and achieves influence mainly through ‘misunderstanding and misconceptions,’ or, to use a more neutral term, refractions” (240). Lefevere conceives translation, along with commentaries, criticisms, evaluation, anthologies, and pedagogy, as a refraction of a work of literature produced in a given system into another system. The same idea can be applied to film writings—the ways in which Pudovkin’s and Eisenstein’s writings on montage were received, modified, or even rewritten in the hands of Chinese translators and film critics (Figure 44-45).

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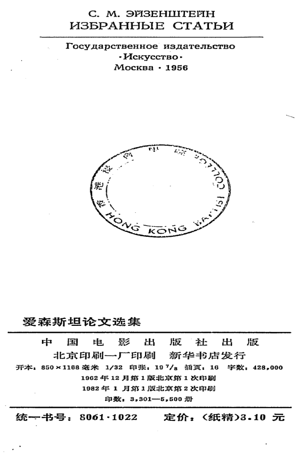
because with montage it becomes possible both to break down and to reconstruct and ultimately to remake the material” (Tsivian 358). Kuleshov was a teacher and mentor to both Pudovkin and Eisenstein.



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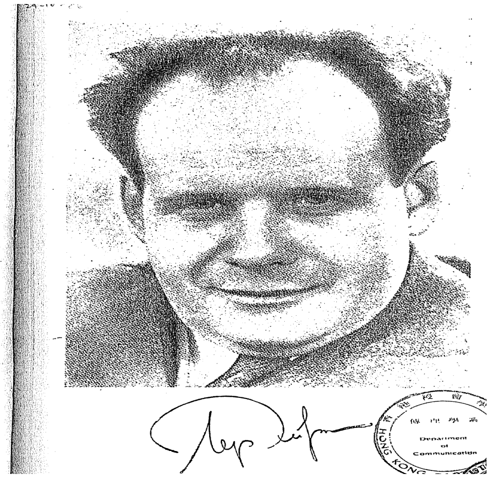

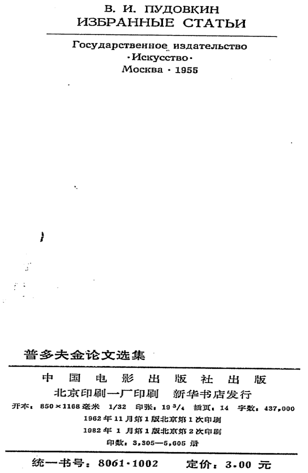

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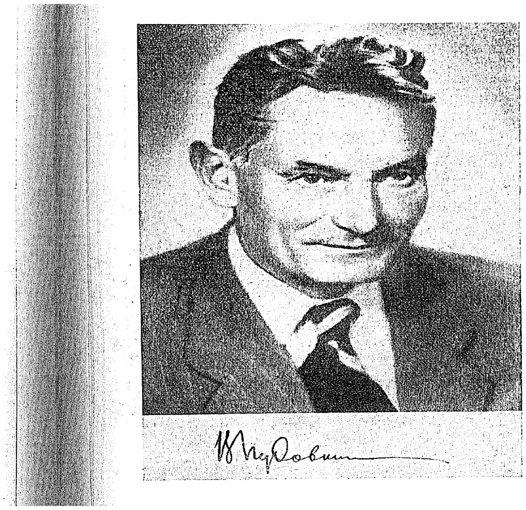

Figure 44, 45: (Top) A volume of Sergei Eisenstein's selected writings, published in Chinese in 1962. (Bottom) A volume of Vsevolod Pudovkin's selected writings, published in Chinese in 1962.

Given the canonical place Eisenstein's and Pudovkin's formulations of montage occupy in the Chinese reception of Soviet montage beginning in the 1930s, Eisenstein's "montage of attractions" and Pudovkin's "montage as series" provide a point of departure and an overarching language for this chapter, and so I will briefly explicate various useful montage categories.[31] Eisenstein's "montage of attractions" can be summarized as follows: (1) Rapid alternation between sets of shots that are independent of one another, generating collision and giving rise to an idea not necessarily present in the shots at the denotative level and (2) Collision of shots as a result of fast cutting and unusual camera angles, which serves to disorient and to defamilarize norms of time and space.

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[31] The biggest disagreement between Pudovkin and Eisenstein lies in "montage as series" (сцепление) versus "montage as collision" (столкновение). The former refers to the unrolling of an event through a

Pudovkin's "montage as series" refers to the unrolling of an event through a series of fragments (a narrative following a given course with maximum continuity and minimal disruptions from non-diegetic inserts). Pudovkin's comparative montage (contrast, parallel actions, simile, simultaneity, and leitmotif) is a refinement of D. W. Griffith's basic editing that achieves narrative economy and diegetic contiguity. The five kinds of comparative montage categorized by Pudovkin were reiterated by Shen Fengwei and Zhang Junxiang beginning in the 1940s and throughout the 1950s (see Zhang Junxiang 1959). Brief explanations for each category are as follows:

1. Contrast (контраст): To illustrate how a contrast can force viewers to make comparisons between two activities, Pudovkin uses the example of a contrasting comparison between the plight of a starving man and the senseless gluttony of a rich man established by individual shots within scenes.

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series of fragments, whereas the latter refers to the collision of shots that gives rise to an abstract idea. Eisenstein writes:

> A graduate of the Kuleshov school, he [Pudovkin] zealously defends the concept of montage as a series of fragments (сцепления кусков). In a chain. "Bricks" (кирпичики). Bricks that expound an idea serially. I opposed him with my view of montage as a collision (столкновение), my view that the collision of two factors gives rise to an idea (Eisenstein, "Beyond the Shot" 144)

Pudovkin speaks of the forceful direction of the spectators, whereas Eisenstein speaks of "a series of blows to the [audience's] consciousness and emotions" (Sargeant 174).

2. Parallel action (параллелизм): Pudovkin uses the example of an impending execution of a strike leader and his drunk boss looking at his watch in a restaurant to illustrate how “two thematically unconnected actions are linked together and proceed in parallel” (63).
3. Simile (уподобление): A simile conveys an abstract concept without intertitles. For instance, the final scene of *Strike* (*Stachka*) (Eisenstein, 1925), where a series of shots alternate between the shooting down of the workers and the slaughtering of a bull, conveys brutality with vividness and intensity.
4. Simultaneity (одновременность): To illustrate the “simultaneous rapid development of two actions, with the outcome of one depending on the other,” Pudovkin uses the example of the ending of D. W. Griffith’s *Intolerance* (1916), composed of a series of shots rapidly alternating between the impending execution of a worker and his wife trying to catch up with the governor’s train in order to obtain a pardon for him (63).
5. Leitmotif (напоминание): A device of reiteration that emphasizes a main idea of the script. For instance, the recurring shot of a bell in the Church in an anti-religious script conveys the hypocrisy of the Church.

It is notable that Pudovkin’s categorization of comparative montage was favored over Eisenstein’s montage methods, which were deemed “esoteric”: “Practically speaking, Eisenstein’s theory is too broad and esoteric. It is difficult to apply and comprehend’ (Shen, “Zaitan ‘mengtaiqi’” 19). Taking into account Eisenstein’s labeling as a formalist in the Soviet Union by the 1930s, Chinese film critics who appreciated Eisenstein’s film art began to re-evaluate his films with a critical eye. The positive attitude towards Pudovkin, sometimes referred to as the “Russian Griffith” (because of

Pudovkin's explicit acknowledgement of D. W. Griffith's basic editing, upon which he developed his montage methods), is not surprising, taking into account the popularity of Hollywood movies in semi-colonial Shanghai beginning in the 1910s.[32] By the 1930s, early Shanghai cinema had mastered the close-up, crosscutting, and comparative montage refined by Griffith (in the 'classical continuity system'), Pudovkin, and others, and had creatively put those methods to use.[33]

For example, the left-wing filmmaker Cai Chusheng mobilizes montage for political criticism in *The New Woman* (*Xin nüxing*, 1934). While the narrative of *The New Woman* largely follows classical Hollywood narration as the tragedy of the protagonist Wei Ming unfolds, there are specific moments when the use of montage intervenes in the flow of the narrative and takes it to a higher level of affective intensity. In the scene where Wei Ming dances with her courter, for example, a contrast montage sequence juxtaposes close-up shots of dancing feet with feet of the laborers framed by a clock, establishing parallel actions in a shared temporality represented by the clock (Figure 46). The combination of similarity in form (the circular frame) and contrast in meaning points to class contradictions.[34] Here, montage creates a third meaning through the collision of two images framed by a clock.

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[32] Given Pudovkin's appraisal and refinement of Griffith's film method, one could say that, stylistically, Pudovkin was no revolutionary at all. Amy Sargeant suggests that Pudovkin's chief purpose may have been "no more than to codify and lend testimony to techniques which he judged had proved themselves already efficacious elsewhere" (xxv). In this sense, Chinese filmmakers' preference for the more pragmatic Pudovkin over the esoteric Eisenstein is not surprising.

[33] While Chinese translators in the 1930s were interested in Soviet montage as a formal experiment in the strict sense, various films from the 1930s onwards had brief examples of Soviet-style montage as well as more numerous examples of Hollywood-style "montage sequences" (which should not be confused with Soviet montage). A Hollywood-style "montage sequence" is a segment of film that condenses a passage of time into a succession of images connected by dissolves, fades, wipes, or superimpositions.

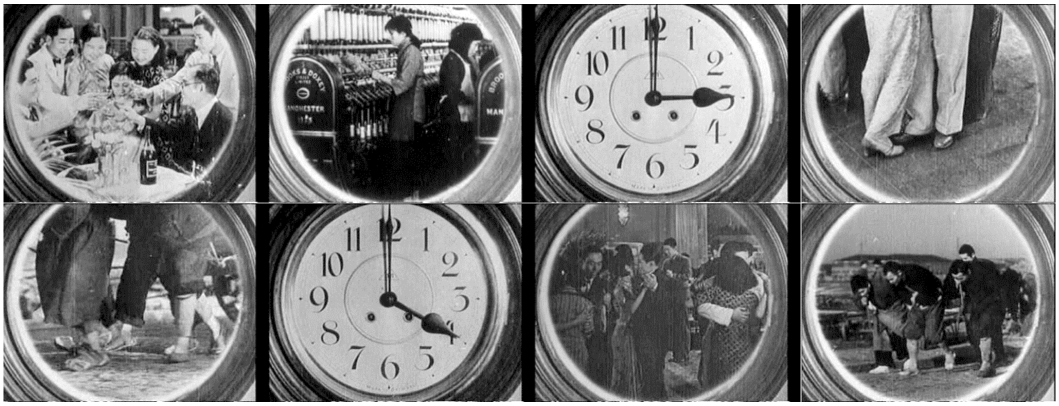
Figure 46: A contrast montage sequence that establishes parallel actions in *The New Woman* (1934).

The contrast montage sequence is later followed by a split screen montage sequence (montage within a frame), where Cai unifies temporally and spatially disconnected images, depicting teacher and students singing a revolutionary song on one corner of the screen, while the rest of the screen depicts the colonial architecture on the Bund in Shanghai (Figure 47). Through the use of the split screen, the two unrelated events are linked together and proceed in parallel. In addition to parallel actions, the split screen montage sequence most importantly establishes a contrast through the singing of a revolutionary song against the backdrop of semi-colonial Shanghai. Interestingly, sound, at its inception in Soviet Russia, was conceived by both Eisenstein and Pudovkin as a distraction from the visual and thus an inhibitor to the aesthetic and ideological functions of montage. However, in the case of *The New Woman*, situated on the threshold of the sound era in Chinese cinema, sound elevates the affective intensity of montage with clarity and forcefulness.[35]

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[34] In suggesting that montage is often mobilized for political critique by left-wing filmmakers, I do not mean that montage as a cinematic technique is inherently ideological. In fact, the same cinematic technique is used in films such as *Little Angel* (*Xiao tianshi*) (Wu Yonggang, 1934) and *Song of China* (*Tian lun*) (Luo Mingyou, 1935) to promote the Nationalist official ideology and to serve a different political objective. Nonetheless, as argued earlier in this article, the revolutionary allure of Soviet montage held an attraction for left-wing filmmakers such as Cai Chusheng, who experimented with the novel technique.

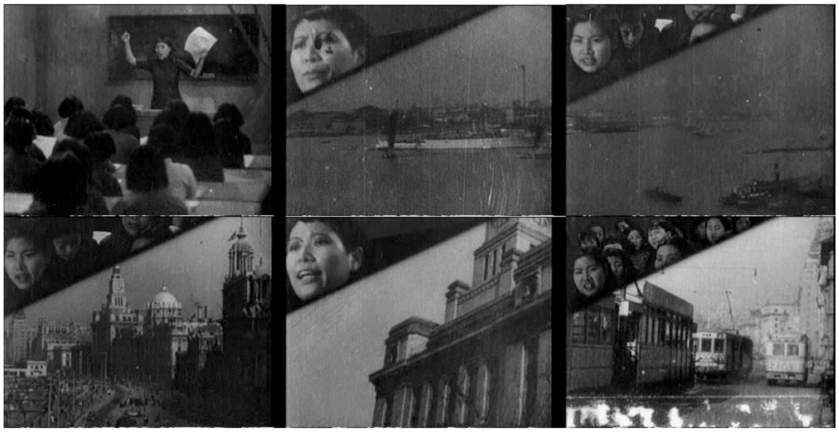

Figure 47: A split screen montage sequence that establishes contrast as well as parallel actions in *The New Woman* (1934).

While the creative combination of classical Hollywood narration and experimentation with Soviet montage indicates the versatility of Chinese filmmakers such as Cai and others, Shen Fengwei nonetheless expressed a perceived lack in relation to foreign cinematic counterparts: “It is not that the close-up and various editing methods are not used in Chinese film. What is it that we lack? The reason why we are not able to separate film from stage drama is because we are not using montage well enough” (“Zaitan ‘mengtaiqi’” 19). Here, montage is conceived as a cinematic means of expression that potentially enables Chinese cinema to overcome its perceived lack in comparison with foreign cinematic counterparts. Interestingly, rather than calling for a wholesale subscription to Soviet montage, Shen called for a selective adoption and even supplementation of Soviet montage both in theory and practice: “If possible, we should improve and supplement montage in terms of theory or technique” (“Tan ‘mengtaiqi’” 19). Shen’s statement is significant in the sense that it is not concerned with authenticity, originality, or fidelity to certain conceptions of montage. Shen’s pragmatic attitude, a first step toward unveiling the riddle of montage, was accompanied by his call for a new path for Chinese cinema: “Now that film is an independent art, we should walk a new path. This new path may be ‘montage,’ or maybe not. Nonetheless, a new path is absolutely necessary” (“Zaitan ‘mengtaiqi’” 19). Shen’s attempt to debunk the mystery of montage was later echoed by filmmakers who took up the task of reinventing “montage” in renegotiating the position of Chinese cinema vis-à-vis the world.

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[35] The revolutionary song “Huangpu River” was censored for its anti-imperialist lyrics at its original release in 1935. While it is hard to retrieve the original audience reactions to the sound effects of the film, I suggest that the director’s intention to include the song in the montage sequence (on both the narrative and formal level) is a creative attempt to strengthen the emotional and political effects of montage as Shanghai cinema transitioned to the sound era. Beginning in 1933, film songs from films such as *Twin Sisters* (*Zimeihua*) (Zheng Zhengqiu, 1933) and *Song of the Fisherman* (*Yuguangqu*) (Cai Chusheng, 1934) became hugely popular among Chinese audience.

Reinventing Montage: The Rhetoric of Simplicity

Film discourse during the Seventeen Years was marked by a creative negotiation with montage aesthetics. As Weihong Bao points out, montage, conceived as a key mode of cinematic means of expression, was “part and parcel of the institutionalization of cinema, when theories of montage and realism gained currency just as the film industry in the People’s Republic was solidifying” (268). The eventful year of 1953 witnessed the institution of the first Five-Year Plan, in which film theory was considered to be one of the three major targets of “film construction.” In the same year, socialist realism, officially endorsed by Zhou Yang as “the road of advance for Chinese literature,” became the banner under which the study of Soviet film theories and techniques took place (“Socialist Realism” 87). For instance, in 1953, a Chinese study group of twenty film artists and technicians spent a year in Moscow to learn about various practices in the Soviet film industry. In the same year, Eisenstein's *The Film Sense* (*Dianying yishu sijiang*) (1953) was translated into Chinese.

By the second half of the 1950s, discussions on montage had reached theoretical sophistication, resulting in several major translations and anthologies on Soviet montage, in addition to publications about montage, editing and the specificity of the filmic medium. For instance, Shi Dongshan's *Dianying yishu zai biaoxian xingshi shang de jige tedian* (Several Characteristics of the Cinematic Means of Expression) (1958), Zhang Junxiang's *Guanyu dianying de teshu biaoxian shouduan* (On the Specific Means of Cinematic Expression) (1959), and Xia Yan's speech on screenwriting (later published in 1978 as *Xie dianying juben de jige wenti* [*A Few Questions about Screenwriting*]) at the Beijing Film Academy in 1958 all highlight the specificity of the filmic medium and construe montage as a fundamental means of cinematic expression.[36] Publications on montage continued to flourish in the early 1960s: Eisenstein's and Pudovkin's selected writings were anthologized in two volumes in 1962, concurrent with the publication of Ji Zhifeng's *Mengtaiqi jiqiao qiantan* (A Brief Introduction to Montage Techniques) (1962). As I have briefly outlined here, the bourgeoning of publications about montage, editing, and the specificity of the filmic medium in the

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[36] Weihong Bao suggests that the notion of a "cinematic means of expression" emerges as the idea gained currency in the 1950s and early 1960s: "Editing, particularly montage (*mengtaiqi*) and decoupage (*jingtou fenqie and jingtou zujie*), were considered key modes of cinematic expression" (265). For a more detailed discussion of the opera film debates that revolved around the tensions between cinematic and operatic means of expression, see Weihong Bao (2010).

1950s and early 1960s points to a sophisticated film discourse, despite the rhetoric of simplicity that often characterizes cinematic productions during the Seventeen Years.

The reinvention of montage was heavily invested in the rhetoric of simplicity—in line with Mao Zedong's talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942, during which Mao explicitly made popularization a higher priority than raising artistic standards. Chinese filmmakers such as Xia Yan highlighted accessibility and simplicity as the guiding principles in the formulation and practice of montage in the 1950s: "Montage in Chinese film can be more accessible (*pingyi*), with more perspectives from the masses (*qunzhong guandian*). We should have accessibility to the majority as our principle" (*Xie dianying juben* 66). In a similar manner, Shi Dongshan considered comprehensibility a priority in film editing: "The basic technique of editing is, first, striving for comprehensibility for the audience. Second, maximizing the fundamental strength of cinema" (*Dianying yishu* 69). Although accessibility, simplicity, and comprehensibility are often emphasized in the discourse on montage, one has to keep in mind that the rhetoric of simplicity itself is a result of sophistication—a sophistication that reformulates cinematic pleasure. The reinvention of montage operates on a complex social and aesthetic agenda with deep concerns for spectatorial experience. Chinese filmmakers and cultural authorities aimed to create a revolutionary aesthetics that was simultaneously accessible and attractive, political and pleasurable. Rather than taking the rhetoric of simplicity at face value and thereby labeling Chinese revolutionary cinema as "simple" and "popular," we can re-conceive it as a cinema that is "accessible" and "participatory," acknowledging a larger capacity for cinematic pleasure.

The first step by which Chinese filmmakers and cultural authorities redefined montage was to reduce the mystery of montage by keeping a theoretical distance from Soviet directors. Such a strategic discursive move was in part necessitated by international politics. Chinese filmmakers and critics were highly conscious of the dangers of formalism and aestheticism as the Sino-Soviet split emerged in the mid-1950s, followed by the Hundred Flowers movement and the "anti-rightist" campaign, which opened up debates on the nationalization of film. As a result, Chinese filmmakers gradually moved away from the Soviet directors whom they had embraced in previous decades. For instance, Eisenstein and even the less esoteric Pudovkin were perceived by Zhang Junxiang as masters who followed the wrong path: "Today, nobody is obsessed with form and considers the organization of shots as the only method of filmmaking. Nonetheless, there was a period when masters like Eisenstein and Pudovkin followed the wrong path" (12). Zhang rejected previous exaggerations of the artistic value of montage as reflected in sayings such as "an individual shot is lifeless," "film is born on the editing table," and "the director's materials are film negatives" (Zhang Junxiang 12).

In a similar manner, Qi Zhou, the translator of Eisenstein's *The Film Sense* (*Dianying yishu sijiang*) (1953), describes Eisenstein as a genius director who nonetheless "gave in to the temptations of formalism" and "lost the connection with life" (Eisenstein, *Dianying yishu* 261). Qi reminds Chinese readers of the need to carefully "select" and "digest" what is beneficial to them (Eisenstein, *Dianying yishu* 262). The official policy of "leaning to one side" was revisited in the mid-1950s as the Sino-Soviet split emerged, resulting in a more critical reception of Soviet masterpieces. The selective subscription to and reassessment of Eisenstein's and Pudovkin's film writings point to the contingency of the original works' reception and the various ways in which they were being claimed, used, and revised by the work of translation and the canonization of foreign film theories.

The second step by which Chinese filmmakers and cultural authorities reinvented montage was to redefine the scope of montage to refer to *all* film editing methods, thus returning to the original meaning of the French term, '*montage*'. Such a discursive move allowed Chinese revolutionary cinema to creatively maneuver between Hollywood continuity editing and Soviet montage without explicitly endorsing or wholly adopting either precedent.

Shi Dongshan is one of the most prominent figures among Chinese filmmakers who rejected confusing explanations of montage in the 1950s. According to Shi, there are two approaches to montage in the history of Chinese cinema. The first approach considers montage "mysterious" and "incomprehensible," whereas the second approach takes a "narrow view" and emphasizes the contrastive effects of montage, which, according to Shi, is the hallmark of Eisenstein's "montage of attractions" ("Bi 'mengtaiqi'" 348). Shi rejects the narrow approach and insists that continuity and contrast should be united rather than oppositional.

Shi defines *lianxu de gouchengfa* (continuity editing) as an editing method that breaks down shots according to the development of plot. *Duili de gouchengfa* (contrastive editing), according to Shi, includes Eisentstein's "montage of attractions" that connects shots depicting one phenomenon with non-diegetic inserts depicting another phenomenon for the purposes of contrast, conflict, and collision that stimulate the audience's thinking. Shi highlights the previously mentioned mass slaughter sequence in Eisenstein's *Strike* (1925), which connects non-diegetic inserts of the butchered bull with shots of the slaughtered masses, as an example of contrastive editing (Figure 48).

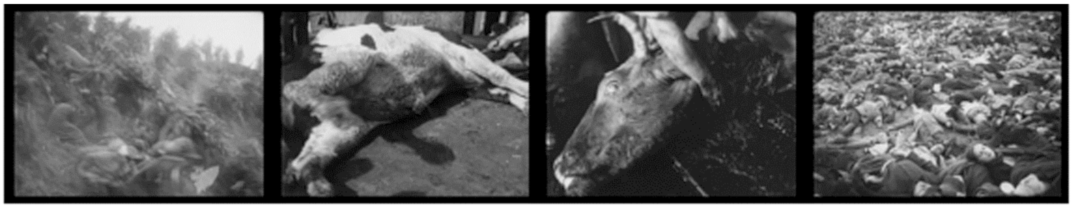

Figure 48: Shi Dongshan considers the mass slaughter sequence in Eisenstein's *Strike* (1925) as an example of contrastive editing.

Shi goes on to say that to define montage narrowly within contrastive editing would be the same as "adopting the view and tone of formalism" ("Bi 'mengtaiqi'" 348-349). Montage, according to Shi, should include "all editing techniques, whether they belong to continuity editing or contrastive editing" (*Dianying yishu* 68–69), especially since Soviet cinema, like many other foreign cinemas, "uses continuity as the basic editing method" ("Bi 'mengtaiqi'" 349).

Xia Yan, like Shi Dongshan, favored continuity for the maintenance of clarity and comprehensibility. An outstanding montage, according to Xia, is "in accord with reason, sensibility, actual life, and visual logic" (*Xie dianying juben* 62). Xia highlights the problems of "*luan*" (chaos) and "*tiao*" (jumps)—chaotic narration, chaotic plot, chaotic frames, and chaotic directions—in the use of montage in Chinese cinema. Xia looks to Pudovkin for theoretical guidance: "There is a good quote from Pudovkin: 'Generally speaking, the basic demand of film is to direct the audience's attention to the chronological development of plot'" (*Xie dianying juben*).[37] The emphasis on chronological narration and continuity is best expressed in Xia's explanation of the term "*fenjingtou juben*" (shooting script): "In English, a shooting script is called 'continuity' [original in English]. The word comes from the verb 'continue,' and the meaning of 'continue' includes 'to connect' and 'to go on'" (*Xie dianying juben* 61). The emphasis on clarity, chronology, and continuity shared by Shi Dongshan and Xia Yan points to an effort to make cinema accessible and comprehensible for a wide audience.

For the purpose of reinventing montage as a general term for all film editing methods, Chinese filmmakers and critics such as Xia Yan, Shi Dongshan, Zhang Junxiang, and Ji Zhifeng redefined the scope of montage to include the following four aspects in film editing: (1) the structure and composition of individual frames; (2) the editing of shots; (3) sound (as constitutive of montage); and (4) montage as a method that creates continuous and contrastive effects. More specifically, Ji Zhifeng redefines and re-codifies montage as a general term for all film editing methods in the form of a reader-friendly manual with the aid of illustrations in *Mengtaiqi jiqiao qiantan* (A Brief Introduction to Montage Techniques) (1962) (Table 2). In his introduction, Ji, like his counterparts Shi Dongshan and Xia Yan, broadens the scope of montage to include "all the techniques related to the arrangement of shots and sound composition" (2). The "editing of shots," according to Ji, is still nevertheless "the foundation of montage" (2). Such a discursive move to redefine montage so that it encompasses all film editing methods rationalized the creative adaptation of both Hollywood continuity editing and Soviet montage in Chinese revolutionary cinema.

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[37] Here, Xia Yan is emphasizing narrative logic and diegetic contiguity, i.e. Pudovkin's "montage as series," as opposed to Eisenstein's "montage as collision."

1. Shot distance and scenic development
2. Change in camera angle and unity of direction
3. Juxtaposition of image and match of composition
4. Division of segments and pauses between frames
5. Main actions and fluency of editing
6. Length of shots and pace of emotional infection
7. The use of non-diegetic sound
8. The use of subjective sound
9. The use of combined sounds

Table 2: Ji Zhifeng's *A Brief Introduction to Montage Techniques* (1962) is divided into nine sections, all of which constitute montage as a general term for all editing methods.

Shot Division as a "Re-creation"

The first step to clarify definitions of montage was taken by Chinese filmmakers such as Shi Dongshan, who first of all revisited the basic principles of shot division that constitutes montage: "What is called 'editing' (*jianjie*) actually belongs to the category of shot division (*fen jingtou*) (there are many people who are confused with the concept). That is because the editing of shots in narrative films is determined by shot division" ("Bi 'mengtaiqi'" 348). Shot division and the writing of a shooting script, described by Cheng Bugao as a "re-creation," (*zai chuangzuo*), were developed into a specialized and collaborative method during the communist era, when all films produced were based on shooting scripts after multiple discussions and revisions (*Yingtan yijiu* 141). The director Zheng Junli, for instance, placed shot division as the second step in the process of film production, right after the writing of a literary script (*wenxue juben*).

Described by Cheng as a "re-creation," shot division is a reinvention of a literary script in its filmic form and requires a re-conception of the script in terms of shot distance, camera angle, length of shots, division of segments, pausing, and sound. In other words, shot division and the writing of a shooting script involve a rethinking of film as an artistic medium, whose specificity China is said to have "lacked," as Shen Fengwei put it in comparison with foreign cinema: "I used to ask a few foreign experts what they think of Chinese film. They all said that 'Chinese film seems to be too close to stage drama (*wutaiju*).' Such an answer is earnest, but it is also a euphemism. They may as well say that Chinese film lacks the specificity of the filmic medium" ("Zaitan 'mengtaiqi'" 18). Montage, conceived by Zhang Junxiang as the grammar of film, became a method by which Chinese filmmakers sought to overcome the "lack of actions, excessive dialogue, oral narration, and complex structure" in Chinese cinema (4).

Shot Distance and Camera Angle

Shot distance and camera angle were first singled out by Ji Zhifeng in his introduction to montage. Ji illustrates the correlation between shot distance and emotional intensity in the form of a curve: the shorter the shot distance, the higher the emotional intensity (Figure 49). In other words, according to Ji, a close-up yields more intense emotions and spectatorial identification, echoing Pudovkin's appraisal of Griffith's refinement of the close-up as a crucial component of montage. The correlation between shot distance and emotional intensity became the basis for engineering climactic moments in film, a point I will return to later.

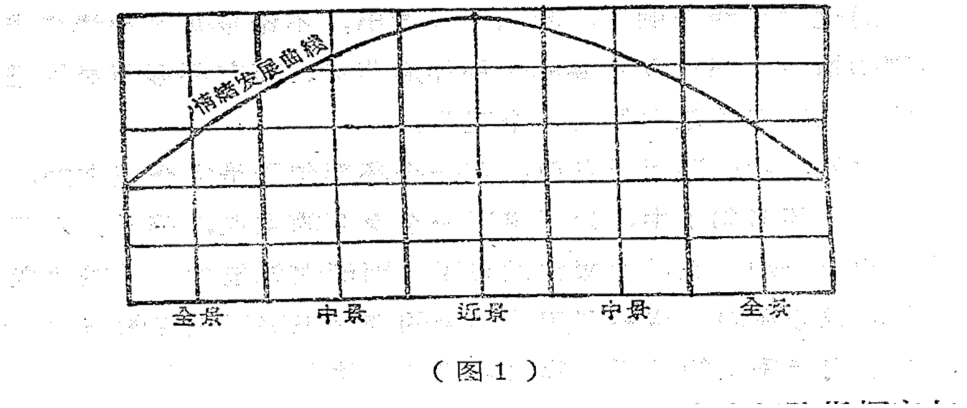
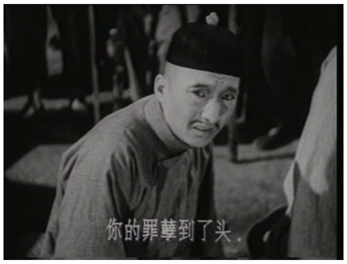
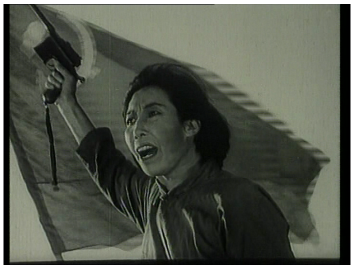


Figure 49: Ji illustrates the correlation between shot distance and emotional intensity in the form of a curve (the curve of "emotional development"). The shorter the shot distance, the higher the emotional intensity. X-axis (from left to right): long shot, medium shot, medium close-up shot, medium shot, and long shot.

Camera angle works in hand in hand with shot distance to create the visual image (*shijue xingxiang*) of heroes and heroines. High-angle shots are typically used to depict villains and class enemies, whereas low-angle shots are typically used to depict heroes and heroines, so that they appear larger than life. For instance, the condemned Wang Shiren in *The White Haired Girl* (*Baimaonü*) (Shui Hua and Wang Bin, 1950) is depicted in a high-angle shot that visually belittles the moral villain and the class enemy kneeling on the ground (Figure 50). In contrast, the heroic female soldier Zhao Yiman is glorified with a low-angle shot (Figure 51). Even a child solider in *The Urgent Letter* (*Jimaoxin*) (Shi Hui, 1954) is depicted in a low-angle shot that visually enlarges the physical stature of the child soldier against the vast landscape (Figure 52).





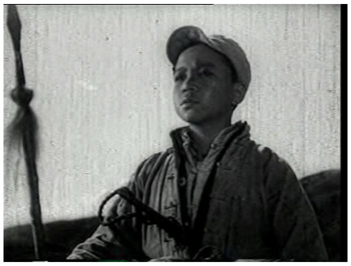


Figure 50-52: The use of high and low-angle shots to depict heroes, heroines, and villains.

Pleasurable Attractions

Despite the discursive move away from Soviet montage, the discreet attractions of Soviet montage persisted and were renewed in subtle and ingenious form in Chinese revolutionary cinema. Although the definition of montage was broadened during the Seventeen Years to refer to all film editing methods in the general sense, I conceive of montage in Chinese revolutionary films as a highly self-conscious cinematic technique that creates pleasurable attractions at climactic moments. Those pleasurable attractions are visual, aural, kinesthetic, political, and even erotic and serve to facilitate audience identification with a collectivized subject.

My particular use of "attractions" establishes a potential dialogue with "montage of attractions" formulated by Sergei Eisenstein and "cinema of attractions" suggested by Tom Gunning in his writings on early cinema. Tom Gunning suggests the term "cinema of attractions" to help us understand the exhibitionist quality of early cinema before the integration of narrative from 1906 onwards. According to Gunning, the act of showing and exhibiting (such as the recurring look at the camera by actors) "incites visual curiosity" and "supplies pleasure" to an audience fascinated by the potential of the new medium (58). Gunning takes the term "attractions" from Eisenstein's "montage of attractions" because of the latter's emphasis on direct stimulation rather than diegetic absorption.

In the context of Chinese revolutionary cinema, montage sequences accompanied by revolutionary songs function as a direct stimulation and a visual and aural attraction integrated into diegetic absorption. As mentioned earlier in this article, in *The New Woman*, sound augments the affective intensity of montage. Montage sequences in Chinese revolutionary films are often accompanied by revolutionary songs to heighten dramatic and emotional effect. These montage sequences turn the cinematic experience into climactic moments of sight and sound, creating visual and aural pleasure and further facilitating diegetic absorption and this, I would argue, is one of the primary attractions of Chinese revolutionary cinema. It is an attraction that is premised on direct stimulus rather than an intellectual leap generated by Eisenstein's "montage of attractions."

Montage and the Use of Revolutionary Songs

For instance, in *Gate Number Six* (*Liuhao men*) (Lü Ban, 1952), fast cutting, combined with a revolutionary song in a montage sequence, not only attracts the audience with sight and sound but also generates a kinesthetic force that is provocative. The montage sequence is characterized by quick editing with manifold shot ranges and camera positions, which serve to defamilarize, exhibit, and glorify physical labor as a joyous collective endeavor (Figure 53). As a result of the frequent succession of individual faces and bodies, spectators are stitched into the diegesis by identifying with the group of workers as the mass hero and the collectivized subject. As David Bordwell suggests in the context of historical–materialist narration: "Rapid editing is the most self-conscious effort of the rhetorical narration to control the pace of hypothesis formation" (*Narration* 249). Combined with the forceful rhythm generated by the theme song, fast cutting maximizes narrative economy and diegetic contiguity central to Pudovkin's "montage as series" (the unrolling of an event through a series of fragments) and creates a strong sense of kinesthetic motion. The orchestration of visual and sound effects through the use of montage creates the impression that, in the words of McGrath, “communists have more fun” (“Communists”). It is “precisely through collective action that the individual finds the greatest meaning and fulfillment” (McGrath, “Communists”). In the case of *Gate Number Six*, a film about the success of a workers’ strike, the combination of fast cutting and revolutionary song in a montage sequence creates pleasure at the level of the senses and facilitates audience identification with the collectivized subject.

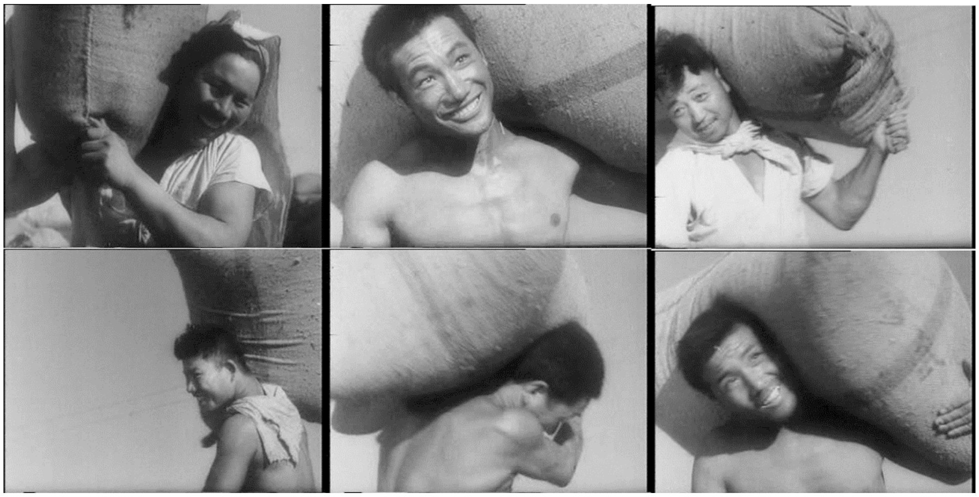


Figure 53: Fast cutting is combined with a revolutionary song in a montage sequence in *Gate Number Six* (1952).

Chinese revolutionary cinema often makes use of Hollywood-style montage sequences to condense the passage of time into a succession of images connected by superimpositions, dissolves, and fades. Such montage sequences, often accompanied by songs, not only function as cinematic punctuations and transitions but also heighten cinematic pleasure. For instance, the montage sequence in the climactic ending of *The White Haired Girl* (1950), accompanied by a revolutionary song, celebrates the destruction of the villain Wang Shiren's property, the reunion of the protagonist couple, and the change of seasons in a compelling, concise and rousing manner. In the film comedy *Woman Hairdresser* (*Nü lifashi*) (Ding Ran, 1962), a montage sequence, accompanied by the theme song, compresses time and evokes the joy of everyday work in the barbershop in a light-hearted manner (Figure 54).

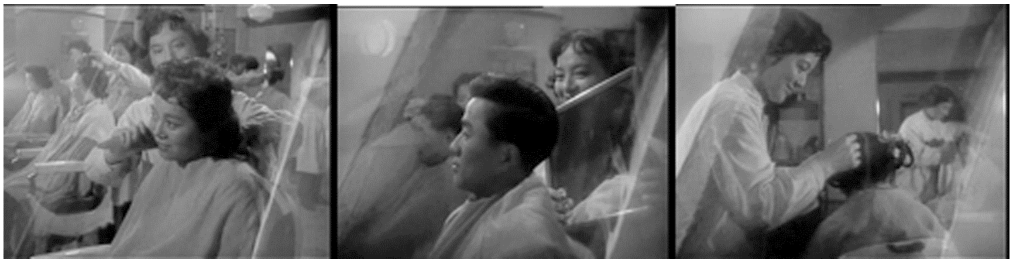


Figure 54: The use of Hollywood-style montage sequence to compress time in *Woman Hairdresser* (1962).

Comparative Montage: The Case of *Nie Er*

As mentioned before, the five kinds of montage under Pudovkin's category of comparative montage were reiterated by Zhang Junxiang in *On the Specific Means of Cinematic Expression (Guanyu dianying de teshu biaoxian shouduan)* (1959). The use of comparative montage and sound came to maturation in the late 1950s, as is exemplified by the ending in *Nie Er* (*Nie Er*) (Zheng Junli, 1958), which utilizes crowd scenes and various kinds of comparative montage—contrast, parallel action, simile, and leitmotif—all of which coexist in the final moments of the film and culminate in the climax of the song that was to become the national anthem of the People's Republic of China.

Nie Er's highly complex climactic montage sequence combines various modes of montage and distorts temporal-spatial order to unify actions that occur in various times and spaces (Figure 55). The montage sequence creates an illusion that all the events—

the long lines of suffering laborers at the prison gate, the mass demonstration in front of the government office, the execution of the Chinese patriots by the Japanese army, the capture of Luding Bridge by the communists, the peasants revolting in the field, and Nie Er at his desk as he composes "March of the Volunteers" in a flash of inspiration—take place in parallel by means of crosscutting. From the germination to the completion of the song, the sequence reinforces montage's capacity to defamiliarize temporal-spatial norms and to reconstruct a novel sense of narrative time and space. Interestingly, Pudovkin's "montage as series"—the unrolling of an event through a series of fragments—is reinvented in the hands of the director Zheng Junli, who puts together fragments of multiple events so as to condense and "speed up" time and to recreate the kinesthetic motion of revolutionary struggle.

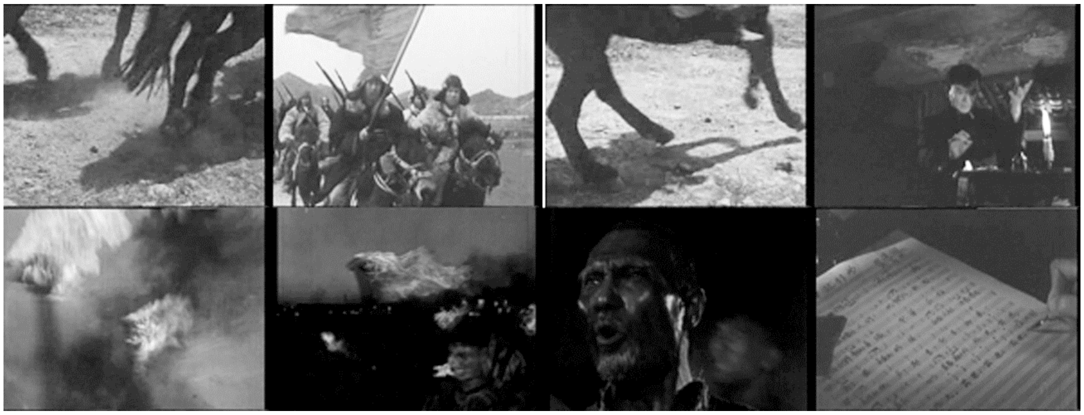


Figure 55: A montage sequence in *Nie Er* (1958) that distorts temporal-spatial order so as to recreate a historical continuity that represents revolutionary struggle.

The rhetorical combination of images taken from the diegetic world not only functions as flashbacks typical of a Hollywood-style montage sequence but also "allows the narration to present images initially designed to denote fabula information, and then to recall them for connotative purposes" (Bordwell, *Narration* 249). The recurring images of the mass demonstration, the suffering laborers, and the heroine Zheng Leidian are reiterated in this sequence to constitute leitmotifs for the film as a whole. The first half of the sequence depicting suffering and humiliation is contrasted with the later half of the sequence depicting victory. A simile is also established between the flare in the field where the peasants revolt and the fire of inspiration that Nie Er has ignited as he composes, at his desk in front of a burning candle, "March of the Volunteers" with the lyrics "brave the enemy's fire, march on." The multiple coexisting modes of comparative montage strengthen the overall ideological and aesthetic goal: to define Nie Er as a revolutionary hero on the cultural front, working simultaneously with the collective—those who fight on the military front and heroically sacrifice themselves.

Montage, "Subjectified Sound," and the Voice of the Collective

According to Ji Zhifeng, "subjectified sound" (*zhuguanhua yin*) refers to the sounds (both diegetic and non-diegetic) generated to evoke subjectivity of revolutionary heroes and heroines. "Subjectified sound" is often combined with montage and "subjective shots" (*zhuguan jingtou*) of positive characters (*zhengmian renwu*) to "directly convey the psychological actions of characters" (Zhang Junxiang 21). In the aforementioned sequence in *Nie Er*, the enlargement of certain details such as inserts of the music sheets and close-ups of Nie Er directs viewers' attention to the subjectivity and creative activity of the composer. The alternations and successions of images accompanied by the revolutionary song create variations of tempo and a constant shifting of emphasis from Nie Er, the positive hero through whom the viewers hear the song, to the fighting army and the masses as a collectivized subject. Interestingly, the use of "subjectified sound" orchestrated by montage produces the voice of the collective. As Zhang Junxiang suggests: “When the same sound crosses over to a scene with different time and space but with the same nature, an emphasizing effect is created” (19). The continuation of sound does not necessarily contradict the content of individual frames, but instead enhances the emotive power of individual frames and achieves a cumulative effect until the end of the montage sequence that culminates in the final completion of the song. That is, the montage sequence, with the aid of the song, establishes continuity despite and because of the distortion of temporal-spatial order.

Without excessive reliance on words, the use of multiple modes of comparative montage combined with sound allowed the director Zheng Junli to depict cinematically a complex network of actions, to construct a historical narrative, and to create a distinct image of the positive hero for audience identification, all of which come together in an aestheticized political moment at the end of the film. The combined use of various kinds of comparative montage accompanied by sound conveys the revolutionary message with a high degree of conciseness and clarity, the effects of which are visually and aurally provocative and pleasurable.

Internal Montage: Superimposition, Memory-making, and Leitmotif

Superimposition, described by Ji Zhifeng as “internal montage” (i.e., montage within a frame), is another prominent montage method employed by Chinese filmmakers to arouse revolutionary memories that function as leitmotifs within filmic narratives. Superimposition, capable of depicting two images from different time and space through double exposure, became a highly malleable device for the purpose of memory-making.

In *Stage Sisters* (*Wutai jiemei*) (Xie Jin, 1965), the literary character of Xianglin Sao, emblematic of feudal oppression, becomes a leitmotif replicated and cited by montage in a turning point in the film. The film cuts to a close-up of Jiang Bo and Chunhua looking at the woodblock print of Xianglin Sao as the former educates the latter about Xianglin Sao's misfortune: "She [Xianglin Sao] was widowed twice and people shunned her as a woman who brings misfortune." Succeeding this shot is a frontal close-up of Chunhua (Figure 56). Then, the camera slowly tracks in to an extreme close-up of Chunhua's teary eyes as she is overwhelmed with emotions. At this critical moment, extra-diegetic music is played simultaneously, and the film once again cuts to a close-up of Xianglin Sao's face. As the camera tracks in, Xianglin Sao's face begins to fade and is superimposed with Little Chunhua's face, which Chunhua recalls. At this point, the extra-diegetic music reaches its climax as the film cuts to another extreme frontal close-up of Chunhua in tears. In this thirty-second sequence, Chunhua's emotional absorption with Xianglin Sao, visualized in a series of alternating shots between close-ups of Chunhua and Xianglin Sao, takes up a total of twenty seconds that constitute the climactic moment of the film as Chunhua begins to understand the suffering of peasant women as a collective. The highly malleable cinematic image of Xianglin Sao, superimposed with the image of Little Chunhua, constitutes a leitmotif that conveys revolutionary memory.

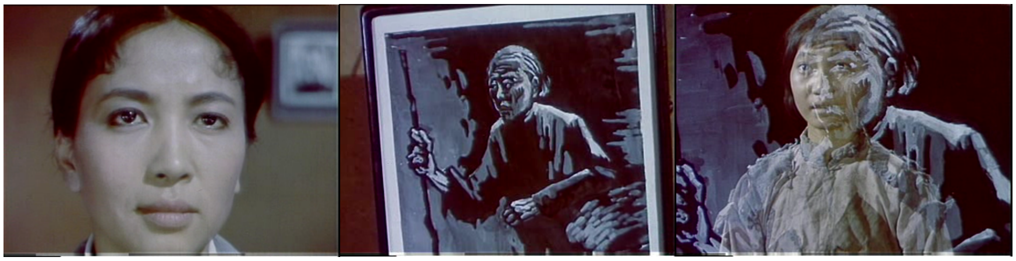


Figure 56: The use of internal montage in *Stage Sisters* (1965).

Montage and the Relay of Gazes

The orchestration of the relay of gazes constitutes one of the most powerful and even signatory moments of Chinese revolutionary films. Stephanie Hemelryk Donald suggests the term “socialist realist gaze” as a way to understand the cinematic convention that was used to evoke “the romance of revolution and a heroic future” (62). Donald defines the socialist realist gaze as a gaze that belongs exclusively to representative leaders. It is a gaze that points to an off-screen space rather than to a defined diegetic object, signaling a leader’s far-reaching political consciousness. According to Donald, the socialist realist gaze is a gaze that “needs to be shared by the characters and the audience” in a moment of “ecstatic communion” (60, 62). A compelling example of the socialist realist gaze can be found in *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzijun*) (Xie Jin, 1960), where a montage sequence is used to signal the heroine Qionghua’s epiphany and leap to political consciousness (Figure 57). At a critical moment in the film, Qionghua, after having witnessed the death of her mentor (and implied lover), encounters the official papers approving her admission to the Party. The camera cuts to an extreme close-up of Qionghua’s gaze towards an off-screen space, superimposed with Party documents. The montage sequence, combined with “subjectified sound” (the *Internationale*), visually evokes the psychological reactions of Qionghua by means of a highly condensed succession of visual motifs such as the Party documents and Qionghua’s socialist realist gaze. It is notable that the montage sequence can also be read as a moment when Qionghua’s libidinal energy is re-channelled and sublimated into political goals—the Party becomes Qionghua’s locus of memory of her mentor and implied lover. That is to say, the political pleasure that the montage sequence creates is in part derived from unconsummated romance.[38]

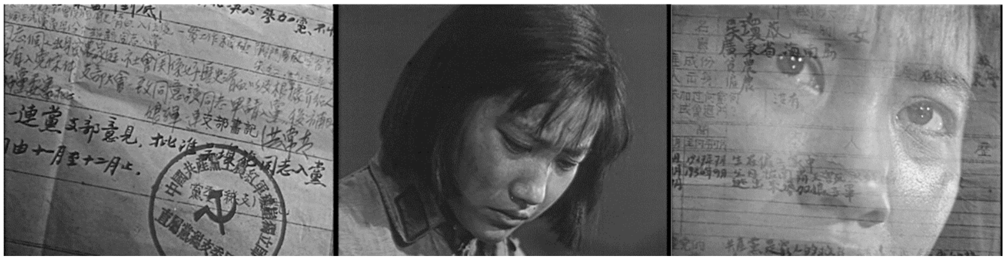


Figure 57: Qionghua’s socialist realist gaze in *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960).

While the emotive power of the montage sequence has been acknowledged by scholars such as Robert Chi (2008), surprisingly little has been said about how Chinese filmmakers came to perfect the orchestration of the socialist realist gaze through the use of montage. The following close readings of montage sequences in the two war films *Zhao Yiman* (*Zhao Yiman*) (Sha Meng, 1950) and *Sea Hawk* (*Haiying*) (Yan Jizhou, 1959) aim to shed light on the ways in which gazes of heroes and heroines were handled differently before they became properly socialist in films such as *The Red Detachment of Women* and *Song of Youth* (*Qingchun zhi* ge) (Chen Huai’ai and Cui Wei, 1959). My purpose is to examine how a collective subject is constructed by the relay of gazes in montage sequences.

The cinematic relaying of gazes has an interesting precedent in Pudovkin’s montage sequence in *Storm Over Asia* (*Потомок Чингис-хана*) (Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1928), where a crowd of Mongols looks with rapture at a precious fox fur. To arouse audience curiosity, Pudovkin joins together numerous close-up shots of the Mongols, whose gazes are all directed to an off-screen space—presumably where the fur is (Figure 58). The variation in shot distance, camera angle, and composition creates an aestheticized effect and a pace that intensifies audience curiosity. Pudovkin's "montage as series" relays the Mongols' gazes in succession, one after another, and hence directs audience attention to the fox fur, the sale of which drives the narration and the ensuing conflict forward.

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[38] Jason McGrath suggests that “the spectatorial desire to see the potential romance consummated is redirected to the didactic function of a cinema explicitly aimed at serving the Communist revolution.” For more details on the sublimation process in terms of film narrative technique, see McGrath (2009).

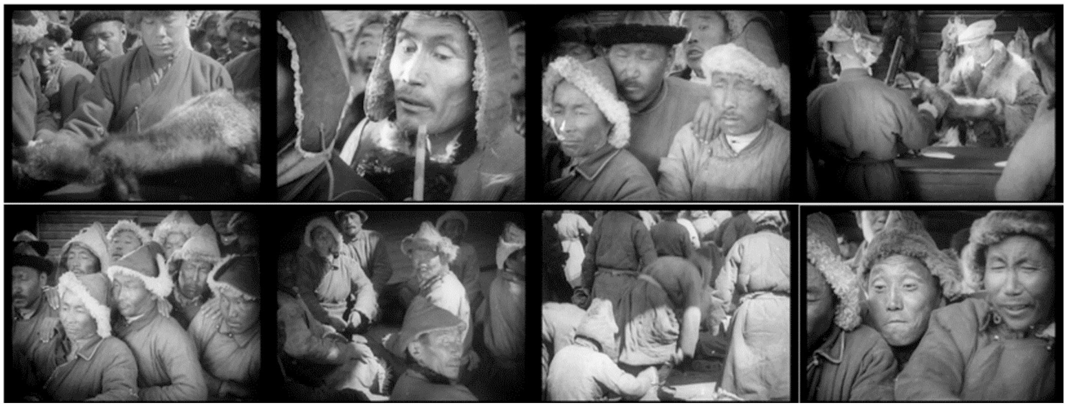

Figure 58: Relay of gazes in a montage sequence in Pudovkin's *Storm Over Asia* (1928).

In the final moments of the film *Zhao Yiman* (1950) when the heroine Zhao Yiman is about to be executed, there is a relay of gazes from the heroine Zhao to the supporting characters, and to the passionate onlookers behind the prison bars (Figure 59). The relay of gazes begins with a medium close-up shot of Zhao looking to an off-screen space as she shouts, "Long live the Communist Party," followed by two medium close-up shots of the supporting characters looking to an off-screen but defined diegetic object (Zhao) behind the prison bars. Their gazes are then relayed to the sympathetic onlookers, who, also gazing into an off-screen space (presumably where Zhao is), are depicted in three consecutive medium close-up shots. The relay of gazes then returns to the fearless Zhao, once again looking towards an off-screen space, followed by a close-up of the supporting character. The final shot of the film is a medium close-up of Zhao looking towards the horizon as she fearlessly marches ahead.

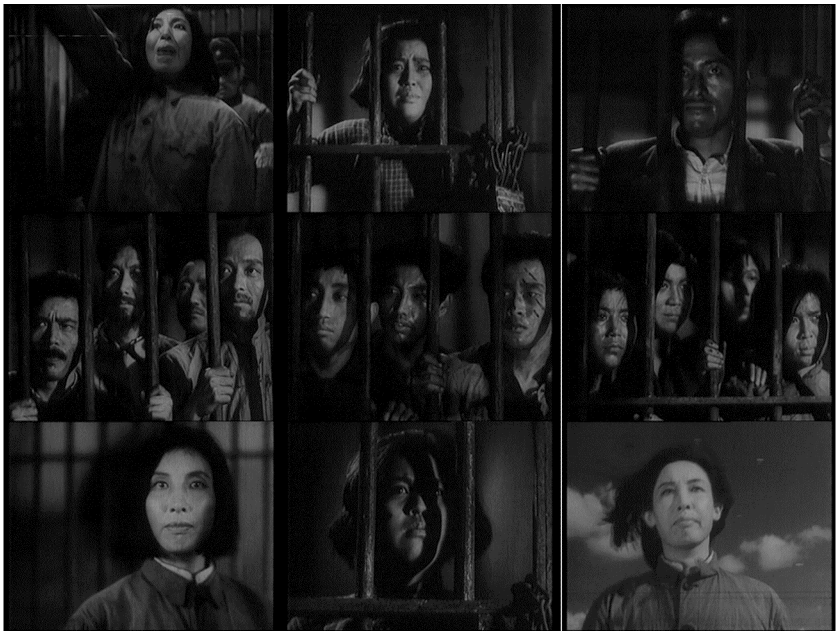

Figure 59: Relay of gazes in a montage sequence in *Zhao Yiman* (1950).

The relay of gazes from Zhao to the passionate onlookers and back to Zhao is rhythmically punctuated by montage, which relays in succession a series of static gazes using the eyeline match, a type of cut that is central to the continuity editing system. The remarkable frontality of the gazes invites and solicits the audience to look on with pleasure—the pleasure in identifying with a collectivized subject in a moment of solidarity. Positioned as the camera's eye, the spectator is not a passive subject of the apparatus but an active participant. Provoked and attracted by the relay of gazes, the spectator performs the act of filling in the blanks and produces for him/herself a third meaning—the fearless Zhao inspires her comrades to become fearless revolutionaries. As a result of the carefully punctuated relay of gazes, the narrative freezes so that it is elevated to a higher level of emotional intensity. At such a climactic moment, spectators are lured into a chain of gazes in which they are implicated. As Donald suggests, "the gaze of the camera, the spectator and the cinematic subject are ideally brought together in a visual logic" (59). The orchestration of montage and the relay of gazes creates a visual logic by which a collective subject is constructed cinematically.

Somewhat different from the relay of gazes in *Zhao Yiman*, in *Sea Hawk* (1959), the relay of gazes takes on even greater clarity and forcefulness with the presence of (1) the national flag, (2) the individual faces of the supporting characters, and (3) "empty shots" (*kongjingtou*). In the scene where the hero removes the national flag from his sinking warship, the hero's gaze is relayed to his comrades, whose gazes are projected towards an off-screen space, presumably where the sinking national flag is (Figure 60). The camera depicts in close-ups and in low-angle shots the individual faces of the comrades with their succession of gazes, therefore directing audience attention to the sinking national flag. Most importantly, the montage sequence is punctuated with two empty shots at intervals, which strengthen the emotional impact of the sequence.

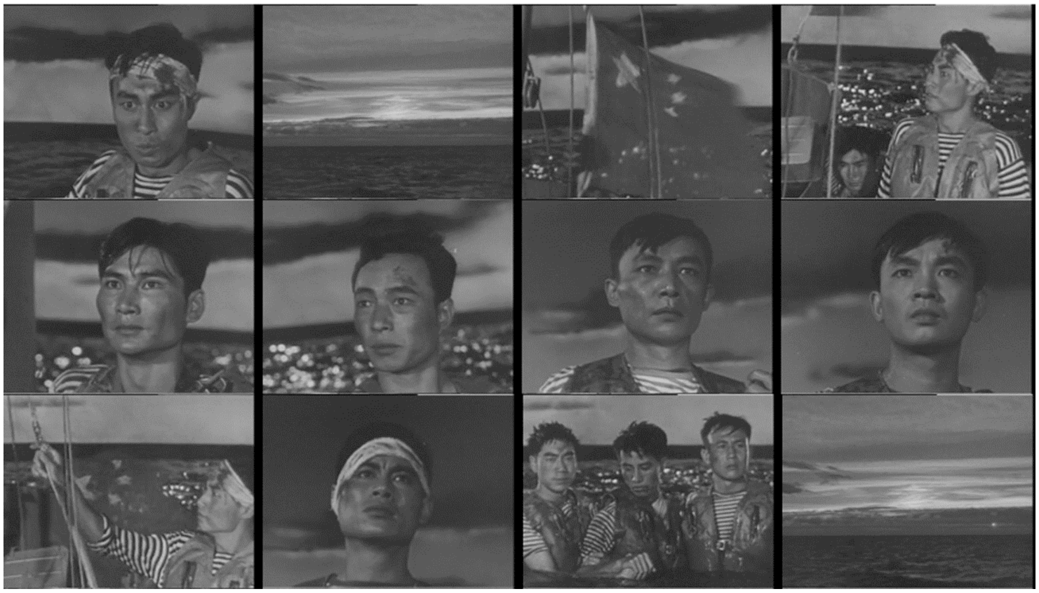

Figure 60: Relay of gazes and empty shots in a montage sequence in *Sea Hawk* (1959).

Chinese filmmakers used the term 'empty shots' (*kongjingtou*) to refer to shots that function as pauses (*jianxie*) succeeding cinematic climaxes. Ji Zhifeng speaks of the need for long pauses after climax so that spectators can "calm their emotions" and "use their imagination" without narrative distractions (39). An empty shot generally depicts scenery only and contains no plot-related actions. It allows a narrative to freeze and therefore achieves the purpose of pausing. In the aforementioned montage sequence, both of the empty shots last for eight seconds, suspending the narrative in a moment of emotional saturation. The empty shots function as cinematic punctuation and work together with the relay of gazes to evoke a solemn mood and a sense of togetherness. Empty shots, as an integral component of "montage as series," do not interrupt continuity, but solicit the audience to fill in the blanks and use their affective imagination following cinematic climaxes.

Romance and Reunion

Climactic moments of Chinese revolutionary films produced during the Seventeen Years are often moments of reunion between an implied romantic couple with the Party as an implied witness. Such moments of togetherness are often represented by series of shot/reverse-shot, a Hollywood convention thoroughly assimilated by Chinese filmmakers by the 1960s. Ji Zhifeng, in *A Brief Introduction to Montage Techniques* (1962), subscribes to the Hollywood convention of shot/reverse-shot that avoids violation of the 180-degree rule (Figure 61). Such a convention, when combined with acting, lighting, and setting, is a highly effective means to convey one-on-one conversations and romantic relationships.

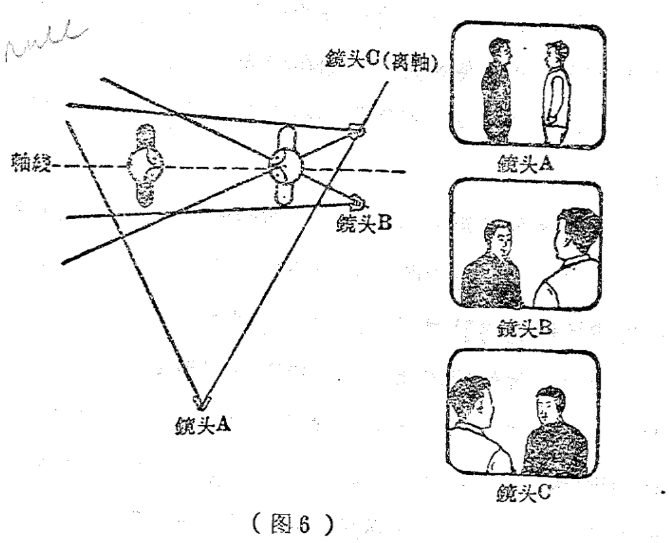

Figure 61: An illustration of the Hollywood convention of shot/reverse-shot in Ji Zhifeng’s *A Brief Introduction to Montage Techniques* (1962).

A major source of pleasure in Chinese revolutionary cinema is the envisioning of a utopia through the lens of heroes and heroines, whose private desire and revolutionary goals are consummated as one with the Party. To engineer such pleasure involves adapting classical Hollywood narration as well as incorporating the use of shot/reverse-shot. In terms of narration, the dual prominence of romance and work typical of classical Hollywood narration was well adapted by Chinese revolutionary cinema during the Seventeen Years—heroes and heroines are often put in a dilemma between family/romance and revolutionary goal. Yet, unlike classical Hollywood narration that brings the dual plot to closure with love consummated and mission accomplished, Chinese revolutionary cinema brings the dual plot to closure with mission accomplished through the sublimation of private desire. Echoing Ban Wang's claim about the "recycling of the individual's libidinal energy for revolutionary purposes," McGrath supplements the sublimation thesis by looking at how genre conventions of classical Hollywood heteronormative romance (visual elements of the mise-en-scène, the use of shot/reverse-shot editing, close-ups and non-verbal performance cues) are deployed to facilitate sublimation (Ban Wang 124). While Chinese revolutionary cinema typically lacks overt physical touch, romance is implied through shot/reverse-shot editing patterns to indulge the audience in pleasure for a moment until the revolutionary goal is accomplished through sublimation.

Shot/reverse-shot is a cinematic trope in reunion scenes typical of Soviet war films such as *The Fall of Berlin* (*Падение Берлина*) (Mikheil Chiaureli, 1949), which Chinese spectators warmly embraced throughout the 1950s. The climax in *The Fall of Berlin*, where the couple is reunited after long years of separation by war, is conveyed through a shot/reverse-shot series of facial close-ups—all taking place in the witness of the leader Stalin (Figure 62). Here, romance and physical embrace are not discouraged, but are strengthened and even openly acknowledged by the leader precisely because victory in the war allows romantic reunion and reunion with the motherland and the Party. In other words, reunion with the Party is most effectively communicated by way of a romantic reunion, conveyed through shot/reverse-shot editing and the dual prominence of romance and work typical of classical Hollywood narration.

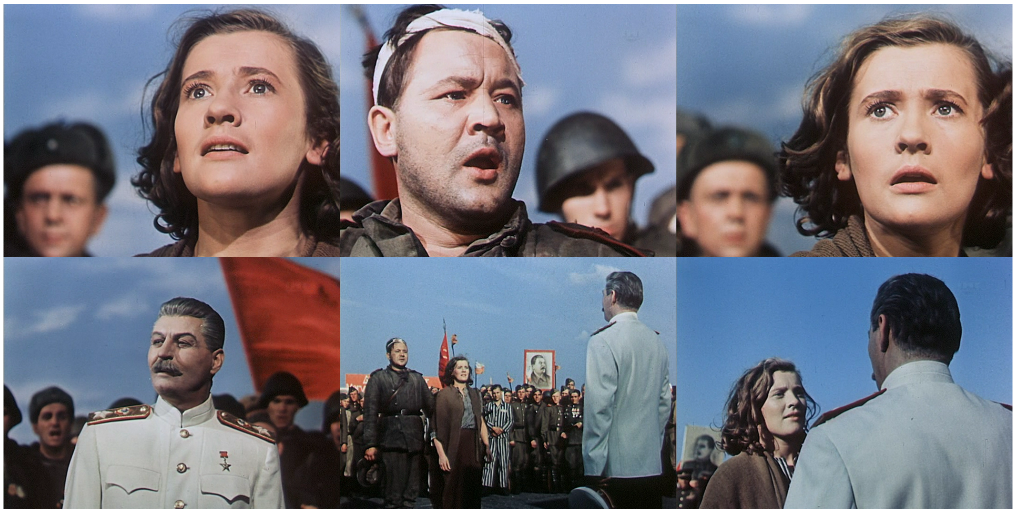

Figure 62: The use of shot/reverse-shot to convey romance and reunion in *The Fall of Berlin* (1949).

In the context of Chinese revolutionary cinema during the Seventeen Years, Chinese filmmakers harnessed classical Hollywood narration and the convention of shot/reverse-shot to create reunion scenes that bring the filmic narrative to a resolution. In the war film *Sea Hawk* (*Haiying*) (Yan Jizhou, 1959), the climactic ending is a reunion sequence that mobilizes shot/reverse-shot series of facial close-ups of the hero and heroine. What makes *Sea Hawk* distinct from *The Fall of Berlin* is the alignment of the relay of gazes (from the heroine to the hero and his comrades, and back to the heroine) that point to an off-screen space with a defined diegetic object—the Party and the objects of desire (Figure 63). The national flag in the background symbolizes the presence and victory of the Party, without which the hero cannot triumphantly return and reunite with the heroine. In the hands of Chinese filmmakers, shot/reverse-shot cutting as an important component of montage became a highly affective cinematic language, which heightened spectatorial identification with the hero, the heroine, and the Party.

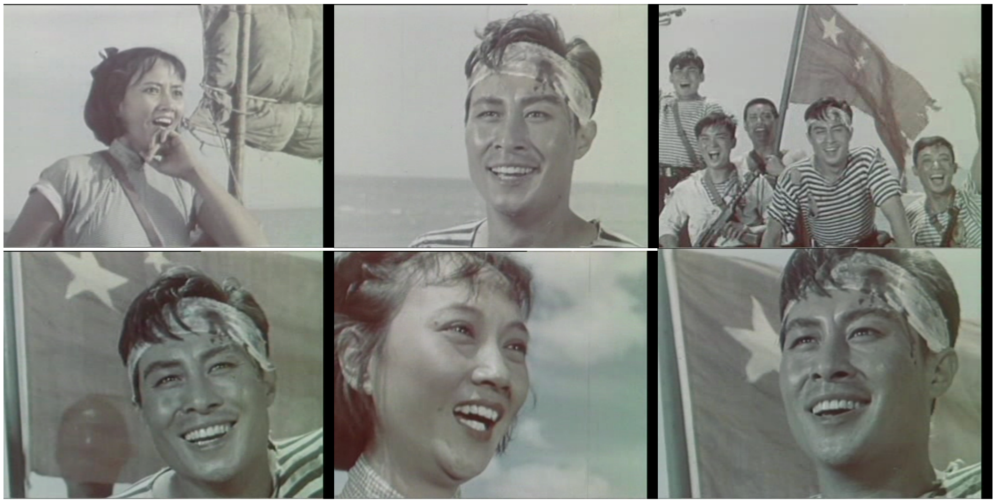

Figure 63: A reunion sequence in *Sea Hawk* (1959).

In later films such as *Song of Youth* (1959) and *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960), empty shots are replaced by sustained close-ups of the socialist realize gaze (which belongs exclusively to leaders and Party members) pointing to an off-screen space without a defined diegetic object (Figure 64). In those two films, gazes of the heroines become properly socialist in the sense that (1) the heroines' gazes point to an off-screen space without a defined diegetic object, signaling the heroines' elevation to political consciousness; (2) such moments of epiphany evoked by the gazes belong exclusively to representative leaders and Party members; and (3) the heroines' gazes are not relayed through other supporting characters, but are orchestrated in a highly condensed manner through the use of prolonged close-ups and extra-diegetic music. The audience is not so much interpellated by the Party, but is compelled by the socialist realist gaze in a highly aestheticized moment of emotional saturation generated by montage.

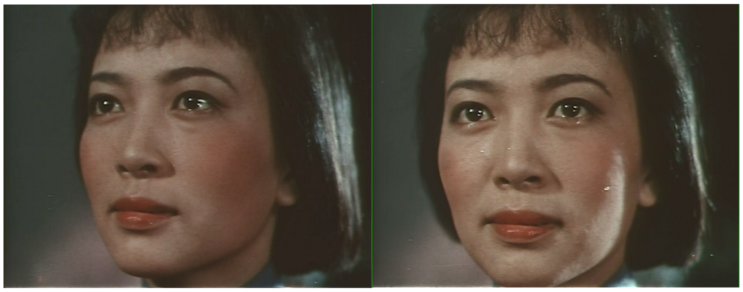

Figure 64: The socialist realist gaze in *Song of Youth* (1959).

Given the central place of spectators who participate in the visual logic of the collectivized gaze, I suggest that the use of montage in Chinese revolutionary cinema is premised on the notion that film viewing is a collective and a participatory experience on a sensual and ideological level. Cinematic attraction is based on direct stimulus (both visual and aural) *and* the reactions of the audience, which Eisenstein underscores in his explications on the ‘montage of attractions’:

> The attraction (аттракцион) has nothing in common with the stunt (трюк) . . . . In so far as the trick (трик) is absolute and complete *within itself* (в себе) [original emphasis], it means the direct opposite of the attraction, which is based exclusively on something relative, the reactions of the audience (реакции зрителя). (Eisenstein, “Montage” 88)

In the hands of Chinese filmmakers, montage is reinvented to provoke and attract the audience at the level of the senses, but without the kind of intellectual leap required by the montage of attractions.

Conclusion

The formal categories described above—relay of gazes, comparative montage, and the use of revolutionary songs and “subjectified sound”—help us to understand how Chinese filmmakers adapted “montage as series” and “montage of attractions” from Pudovkin and Eisenstein in creating affective moments in Chinese revolutionary films. The adherence to Hollywood continuity editing and the maintenance of narrative economy and diegetic contiguity allowed Chinese film-makers to strive for accessibility and comprehensibility for a rural mass audience. The reinvention of “montage” as an umbrella term for all film editing methods not only served to unveil montage and reduce its strangeness but also allowed Chinese revolutionary cinema to swiftly traverse both Hollywood continuity editing and Soviet montage in repositioning Chinese cinema vis-à-vis its foreign counterparts.

In her study of film export from the PRC during the period from 1949 to 1957, Tina Mai Chen (2009: 159) calls for a rethinking of the early years of PRC cinema “not as a period of disengagement from world cinemas, but as part of linked political, social, economic and cultural projects within the PRC that brought the national to the international—and vice versa.” The riddle of montage and its evolving discourse since the 1930s shed light on the way in which Chinese filmmakers and cultural authorities actively pursued a dialogue with Soviet film theories and various cinematic precedents in both theory and practice. Highly informed by international film theory, Chinese revolutionary cinema was not a passive recipient in the dissemination of film theory, but was an active participant in rereading (or even creatively misreading), redefining, and reinventing montage.

Chapter 4

Engendering Socialist Glamour in Positive Heroines: Discourses on Screen Acting, Stanislavski's System, and Revolutionary Realism

This chapter takes the revolutionary discourses on screen acting, Stanislavski's system, and revolutionary realism as points of departure and looks at the cinematic creation of positive heroines during the "Seventeen Years" (1949-1966). How does Chinese revolutionary cinema create positive heroines as prototypes in revolutionary society and resolve the tension between the "typical" and the "individual" under the banner of "a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism?"

Screen acting, which mobilizes the emotions, gestures, and corporeal bodies of performers, plays a key role in engineering climactic moments in Chinese revolutionary cinema. Stephanie Hemelryk Donald suggests the term "socialist realist gaze" as a way to understand the cinematic convention that was used to evoke "the romance of revolution and a heroic future" (62). This chapter goes one step further and focuses on a crucial element that is seldom looked at closely in studies of Mao-era Chinese cinema—screen acting.

While Constantin Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* (1936) and Richard Boleslavky's *Acting: The First Six Lessons* (1933) were translated by the Chinese director Zheng Junli in the 1930s and 1940s, it was not until the 1950s that Stanislavski's system was widely embraced by Chinese film workers who looked to Soviet performers for inspiration. I argue that in the discourse on screen acting during the Seventeen Years, Chinese film workers transpose elements of Stanislavski's system into Chinese cinema through processes of selection and supplementation in the following ways: (1) "Experience" in Stanislavski's system takes on an explicit political motivation in the context of Chinese revolutionary cinema. "Experiencing life" (*tiyan shenghuo*) as a form of political cultivation and class education enhances cinema's claim to revolutionary realism. (2) "Embodiment" in Stanislavski's system is transformed and given cinematic expression in Chinese revolutionary cinema through the sophisticated use of the close-up (translated into Chinese as *texie*). Combined with lighting, the close-up, as the basis of facial performance (*mianbu biaoyan*) and interior performance (*neixin biaoyan*), gives prominence to the face and the socialist realize gaze that are central to the glamour of positive heroines. (3) The introduction of romance and the martyrdom of positive heroes create moments of exemplification of positive heroines and generate the desire for (and pleasure of) communion with the Party. Moments of exemplification and communion are highly formalist moments that manifest an ideal, exceeding the demands of realism and verging on revolutionary romanticism.

Socialist Glamour?

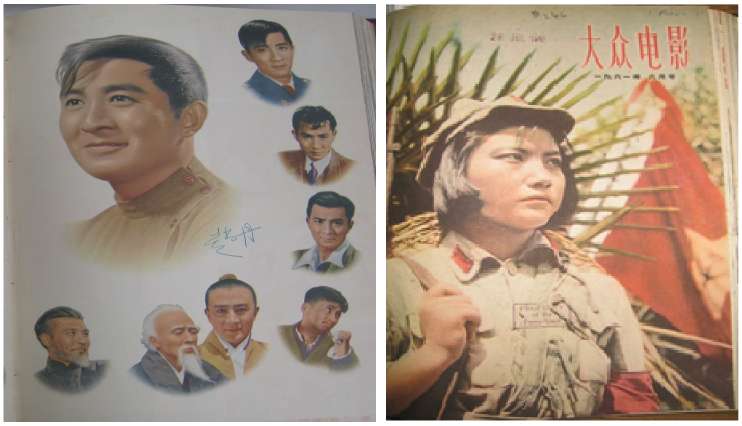

Figure 65, 66: Zhao Dan (left) and Zhu Xijuan (right).

Is there such a thing as “socialist glamour?” Wouldn’t audiences have been intrigued by the centrality of images of actors and actresses who functioned as positive heroes and heroines on screen during the Seventeen Years? Film magazines published in the late 1950s frequently feature socialist red stars such as Xie Fang, Zhang Ruifang, and Zhao Dan with their red cheeks and cheerful looks (Figure 65-66). The circulation of star images and the prominence of the face resemble star culture during the Republican era (1911-1949), except that more soliciting and seductive poses are replaced by the healthy smiles of positive heroes and heroines as models of emulation. As a cinema that strives to generate empathy and identification with the Party, Chinese revolutionary cinema creates distinct and striking images of positive heroes and heroines, who embody the heroic values of the time. The gendered nature of those images also provides models for men and women alike. The representation, replication, and circulation of screen images shed light on how socialist red stars were manufactured. As Xiaoning Lu suggests, the study of stardom “offers us the possibility of examining the whole cinematic process, as the movie star ties production, film and spectator together” (113).

“Socialist glamour” seems to be an oxymoron: Chinese revolutionary cinema favors and idealizes manual labor and sweaty heroes and heroines with bruises, rather than bourgeois fashion and glamorous make-up. Yet, upon scrutiny, film stars of Chinese revolutionary cinema are far from plain. They are glamorous with a twist—instead of dressing in high fashion, film stars as positive heroes and heroines exude a positive attitude and point to a bright future on screen. Lu suggests that “the uneven topology of star studies in Chinese cinema” (the lack of study on film stars in Chinese socialist cinema) manifests an assumption: movie stars are “by-products of industrial practices of Hollywood” (113). Similar to Xiaoning Lu’s approach that “detach[es] the star from an analytical framework of commercial culture,” I explore the ways in which socialist glamour is manufactured in Chinese revolutionary cinema (113). The cinematic production of “air” (*qizhi*), charm, and magnetism, which attract and infect spectators at the level of the senses, is central to the visual, erotic, and political pleasures of communion with the Party (Cheng, “Xuanze yanyuan” 41).

Charisma, air, and heroic spirit seem to be elusive and intangible qualities that are hard to capture. I suggest that those qualities are in fact very tangible and concrete. The charisma of positive heroes and heroines is manifested though the corporeal body in screen acting, as well as behind-the-scene operations such as lighting, sound, cinematography (more specifically montage), and ideology. This chapter looks at how actors and actresses in Chinese revolutionary cinema practiced screen acting and the ways in which Stanislavski’s system was adopted, supplemented, and appropriated to create the “combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism” extolled by Mao Zedong beginning in 1958.

To begin my discussion, I would like to turn our attention to the images of four prominent female film stars from two moments in Chinese film history—the “golden age” of Shanghai cinema in the 1930s and the high point in Chinese revolutionary cinema in the late 1950s. Illustrated below are (1) Ruan Lingyu as a fallen woman who tragically laughs at her own misfortune in *The Goddess* (*Shennü*) (Wu Yonggang, 1934) (Figure 67); (2) Hu Die as a desperate mother as she is about to steal in *Twin Sisters*

(*Zimei hua*) (Zheng Zhengqiu, 1933) (Figure 68); (3) Xie Fang as a young revolutionary as she is admitted to the Party in *Song of Youth* (*Qingchun zhi ge*) (Cui Wei and Chen Huai'ai, 1959) (Figure 69); and (4) Zhu Xijuan as she is admitted to the Party after the heroic sacrifice of her mentor in *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzi jun*) (Xie Jin, 1960) (Figure 70). Those films feature remarkable sequences where the stars' facial performances are featured prominently in close-up shots in succession after one another. While Ruan Lingyu's and Hu Die's facial performances express desperation, Xie Fang's and Zhu Xijuan's facial performances manifest calmness and elevation. The use of the close-up foregrounds the actresses' faces (with special focus on the eyes) to achieve maximum empathy and identification. Those are also moments when acting skills are foregrounded by the camera with significant frontality.

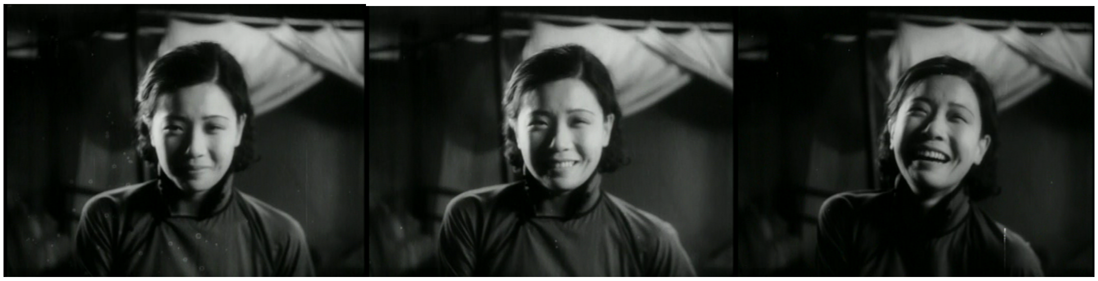
Figure 67: Ruan Linyu in *The Goddess* (1934).

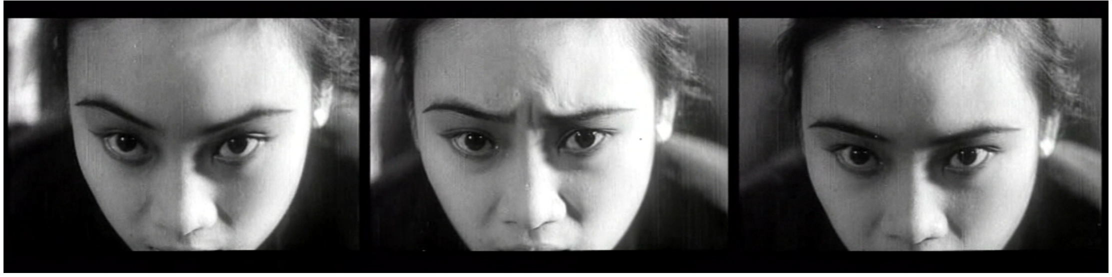
Figure 68: Hu Die in *Twin Sisters* (1933).

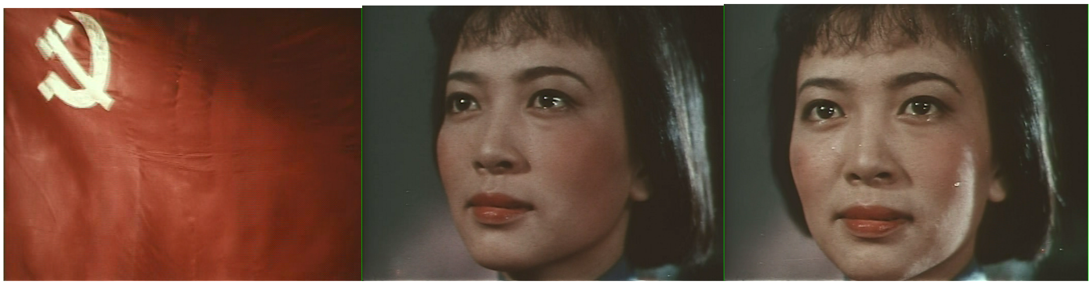

Figure 69: Xie Fang in *Song of Youth* (1959).

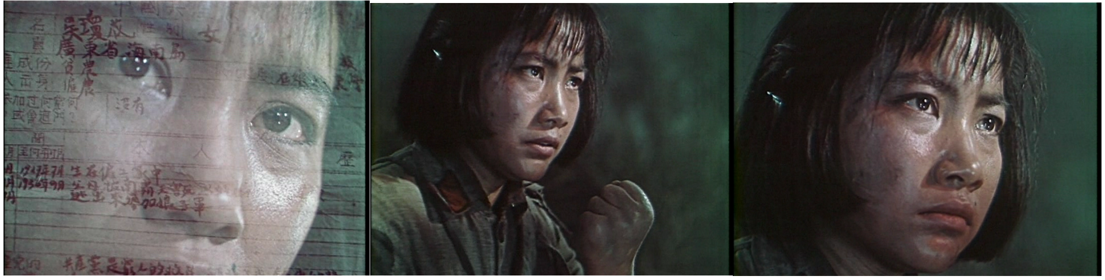

Figure 70: Zhu Xijuan in *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960).

Interestingly, the examples above all claim verisimilitude and a realist style of acting that favors facial performance in close-up. How did a realist style of acting emerge during the Republican era and how did it evolve in Chinese revolutionary cinema during the Seventeen Years? What are the continuities and discontinuities? How is the image of positive heroines constructed on screen and how does it overcome the limits of Shanghai cinema, where female protagonists are often fallen women and desperate mothers?

The Quest for Verisimilitude and Realism in Early Shanghai Cinema: From *Xinju* to Screen Acting

This section looks at the history of the discourse on screen acting in the Republican era. A sophisticated discourse on screen acting (distinguishable from stage acting) emerged in the 1930s, marked by an early adoption of Hollywood-style mimesis and Stanislavski's system. The discourse on screen acting in the Republican era is crucial to our understanding of screen acting during the Seventeen Years because the latter negotiates and revisits the tenets of cinematic realism in early Shanghai cinema.

Let me first begin with the realist tradition in fictional film, which holds sway throughout Chinese film history. Jason McGrath defines the realist tradition in fictional film as "more broadly the set of conventions of mimetic fictional realism that took hold during the rise of classical Hollywood narration in the 1910s and quickly became the global standard for mainstream fictional filmmaking" ("Model Opera Films" 356-357). According to McGrath, by the time of the "golden age" of Shanghai silent cinema in the early 1930s, "a discourse of acting had developed that firmly distinguished film acting from stage acting (even modern stage acting), and insisted on a verisimilar performance style in keeping with the norms of classical Hollywood" ("Model Opera Films" 359). Indeed**,** the quest for verisimilitude and realism coincides with the infiltration and popularity of Hollywood movies, which displaced traditional performance art such as Peking opera. The traditional theater has many techniques for exaggeration or amplification, which, by the turn of the century, was perceived as insufficient to match the new aesthetic of realism that was embraced by reformers of the early twentieth century.

The search for realism and the pioneering effort to modernize music drama began with the establishment of the Spring Willow Society (*Chunliushe*) in 1907, led by students who returned from Japan. The Spring Willow Society abolished stage conventions of Peking opera and advocated *xinju* ("new drama" [or *wenmingxi*, "civilized play"], in opposition to Peking opera, which was referred to as *jiuju* ["old drama”]). *Xinju* aimed at modernizing traditional stage performance by eliminating stage conventions. While Peking opera does not create an illusion of real life on stage, *xinju* creates an illusion of transparency (real life laid bare on stage) so that the audience believes in the fourth wall. Such a difference is manifested in stage architecture. In the teahouse, performance space is enmeshed with audience space as a marketplace, whereas the modern playhouse is based on absorption—spectators are expected to put down whatever they are engaging in and concentrate on the play on stage.[39]

In the late 1910s**,** *xinju* was in turn criticized for improvisation and over-the-top acting. In the discourse on screen acting in the 1920s and 1930s, the domestic conventions of *xinju* acting are deemed “too exaggerative” (*tai guohuo*) and “too unnatural” (*tai bu ziran*) and therefore unsuitable for the inherent “realism” of the new filmic medium (Zheng Zhengqiu 906). Writing in 1925, Zheng Zhengqiu asserts that *xinju* actors “absolutely have to sacrifice their original postures and replace them with gestures that are appropriate to film” (906). The rationale for rejecting *xinju* acting is very often the claim of the inherent realism of the filmic medium as a result of the close-up: “Since drama is set on the corner of the stage far away from the spectators, everything has to be exaggerated—unlike film whose camera can move and magnify in close-up with ease” (Zheng Zhengqiu 907). A similar claim is reiterated by the prominent dramatist Hong Shen in 1934: “Since an actor’s face is magnified three times in a close-up, even his subtle expressions are very visible to the spectators. If he exaggerates his expressions, spectators will regard them as pretentious and way over the top” (“Biaoyan” 949). The acceptance of the so-called inherent realism of the filmic medium was largely due to the Hollywood convention of the close-up that gained currency in Republican China.

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[39] See Goldstein (2003).

Screen Acting: The Close-up, Interior Performance, and Facial Performance

The close-up (*texie*), a Hollywood filming technique translated into Chinese in the 1920s, generates a new consciousness of the corporeal body. Facial expressions are visualized with unprecedented clarity, which necessitates the invention of a new body language for screen performance. Beginning in the 1920s, a new terminology for screen acting was invented to accommodate the demands of the new filmic medium, which was considered as having the highest degree of realism among all the arts. In a passage titled "On Interior Performance" (*Tan neixin biaoyan*) (1925), Feng Xizui establishes equivalence between the two terms "interior performance" (*neixin biaoyan*) and "facial performance" (*mianbu biaoyan*):

> What we call interior performance is the sincere transmission of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and happiness from the heart to the face so that spectators, by looking at the performer's facial expressions, can feel the performer's emotions at heart. Hence, interior performance is also called facial performance. (Feng 914)

Feng's equation of interior performance with facial performance is predicated on the new relation between performers and spectators, brought about by the cinematic convention of the close-up. The "close-up" as a film term was translated and introduced to the Shanghai film industry by filmmakers such as Cheng Bugao, whose short biography of the American director D. W. Griffith was published in series in the film magazine *Dianying Zazhi* in 1924.[40] The Hollywood convention of the close-up shortens the distance between performers and spectators and allows screen acting to become a form of emotional infection that affects spectators at the level of the visceral and even the corporeal.

Interior performance and facial performance, intensified by the use of the close-up, elicit emotional and physical responses such as tears in melodrama. In *The Goddess* (1934) and *Twin Sisters* (1934), Ruan Lingyu's and Hu Die's ability to communicate different levels of emotion with their eyebrows gives them their stature as "stars" famously known for their interior and facial performance. The actresses' star stature is partly a result of the transposition of the corporeal body into the silver screen that magnifies facial performance in close-up.

The "Face-ism" of the Star System

The indexicality of the filmic medium accentuated by the close-up renders the cinematic image as "real," while obscuring the ways in which the newly established body language and facial expressions for film performance are ideologically motivated. By the 1930s, many Hollywood terms of filmmaking had been translated into Chinese as they gained currency in the Shanghai film industry. The close-up is one of the most important filming techniques that sustain the Hollywood star system. Close-ups of movie stars allow the corporeal body to be conceived as a picture—reproducible and disseminated for global consumption in the form of motion pictures, film stills, and advertisements in the global marketplace (Figure 71).

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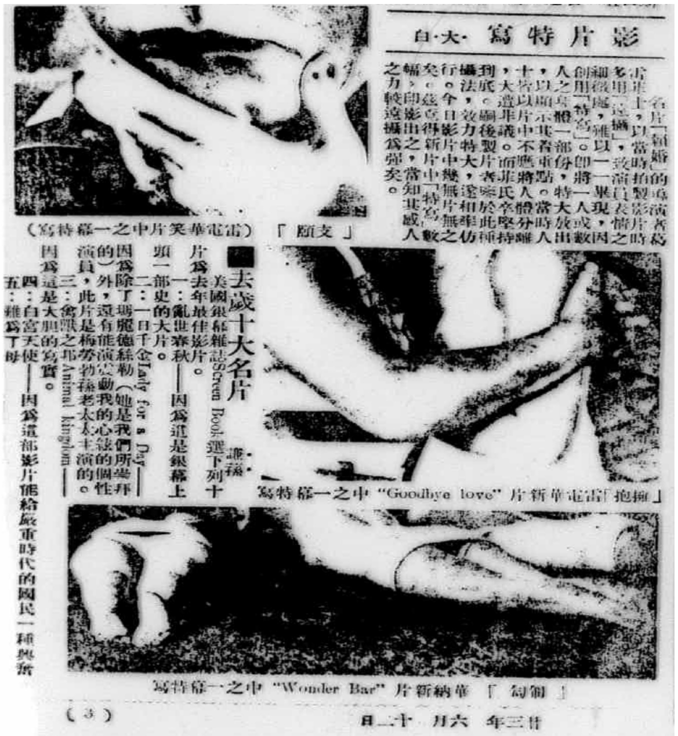
[40] See Cheng Bugao (1924).



影片特寫 ·大·白

「支頤」（雷電華笑片中之一幕特寫）

去歲十大名片 譚·孫·

美國銀幕雜誌Screen Book選下列十片爲去年最佳影片。

一：亂世春秋——因爲這是銀幕上頭一部史的大片。

二：一日千金Lady for a Day——因爲除了瑪麗德絲勒（她是我們所崇拜的）外，還有能演動我的心緒的個性演員，此片是梅勞勃孫老太太主演的。

三：禽獸之邦Animal kingdom——因爲這是大胆的寫實。

四：白宮天使——因爲這部影片能給嚴重時代的國民一種興奮

五：雜爲丁母

「擁抱」雷電華新片"Goodbye love"中之一幕特寫

「[illegible]」華納新片"Wonder Bar"中之一幕特寫

（3）

廿三年六月十二日

Figure 71: The fascination with the close-up (*texie*) as a cinematic technique.

As a result of the circulation and consumption of Hollywood star images in Republican China, the Hollywood star system enters the public imagination, and the faces of movie stars become objects of both fascination and parody. In a comic illustration titled “The ‘Face-ism’ of the Star System” (*Lianzi zhuyi de mingxing zhidu*), published in the film magazine *Wenyi Dianying*, a kiss is featured as the “climax” (original in English) captured by the “camera” (original in English) (Figure 72). The illustration is particularly telling in visualizing what is behind the scene—the hallmark of the star system is represented by the camera’s capacity to register the facial performance of movie stars in close-up during the climactic kissing moment. The prominence of the face as the defining characteristic of Hollywood cinema was well adopted by the Shanghai film industry by the 1930s, resulting in the popularity and success of actresses such as Hu Die and Ruan Lingyu, who did not have any stage experience.

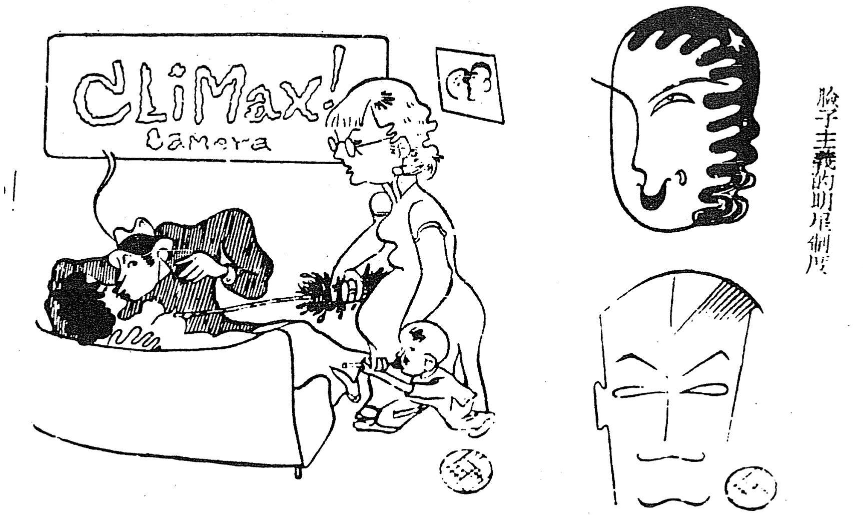

CLiMax!
Camera
臉子主義的明星制度

Figure 72: “The ‘Face-ism’ of the Star System” (*Lianzi zhuyi de mingxing zhidu*).

Feeling over Reason, Reason over Feeling:

The South China Society and Shanghai Xinyou Drama Troupe

The emerging discourse on screen acting (distinguishable from stage acting) in the late 1920s and early 1930s, partially as a result of the widespread use of the Hollywood convention of the close-up based on verisimilitude and mimesis, was accompanied by further reforms toward a realistic style of acting in drama circles and theater groups. The South China Society (*Nanguoshe*) was established in 1925 by Tian Han, and the Shanghai Xinyou Drama Troupe, represented by Yuan Muzhi, was established in 1927. Writing in 1963 as he comments on the development of acting styles in Republican China, Zheng Junli reflects that the South China Society advocated an “emotional acting style” (*weiqing yanji*) that emphasized the “expression of emotions” rather than the “control of emotions,” and the “experience of emotions” rather than “formal techniques”

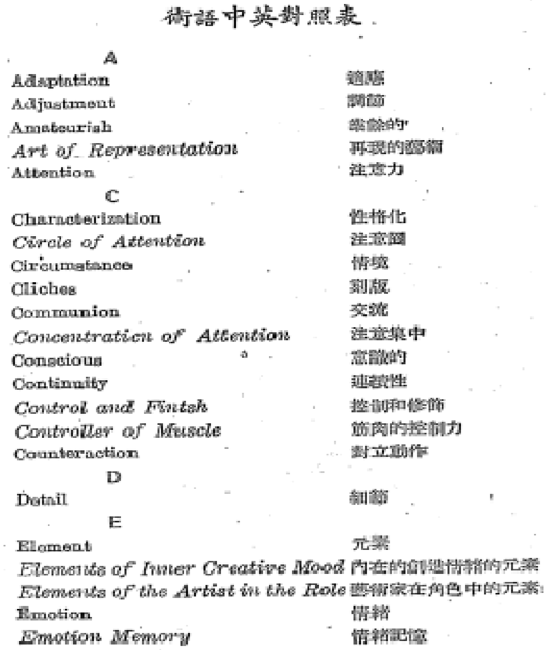
(“Zixu” 66). Some “instinctive performers” (*bense yanyuan*) mobilized their own genuine emotions and lost control on stage, so much so that they cried and almost could not continue the play. The Shanghai Xinyou Drama Troupe, on the other hand, advocated “imitative acting” (*moni de yanji*)—an acting method that, based on observation, imagination, and imitation, creates a role entirely different from the performer’s own personality. Unlike the South China Society, which favored “feeling over reason” (*qing sheng yu li*), the Shanghai Xinyou Drama Troupe favored “reason over feeling” (*li sheng yu qing*); as Yuan Muzhi put it: “On the stage, I master my own emotions, and not the other way round” (Zheng Junli, “Zixu” 67).

Translating Stanislavski’s System: The Case of Zheng Junli

As the discourses on stage acting and screen acting developed along the lines of realism in Republican China, Stanislavski’s system, an acting system that came to serve socialist realism in Soviet Russia, was introduced into China beginning in the mid-1930s. McGrath suggests that “classical Hollywood norms of narration and performance held steady for the most part from the critical realism of the 1930-1940s through the socialist or proletarian realism of the early People’s Republic and even into the combination of ‘revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism’ of the late 1950s to early 1960s” (“Model Opera Films” 359). However, little attention is paid to the role of Soviet influence on Chinese acting style throughout the Republican era and well into the Seventeen Years, not to mention the fact that Stanislavski’s system had a big impact in Hollywood cinema, reinforcing the bias towards naturalism.

Zheng Junli’s translation of Richard Boleslavsky’s *Acting: The First Six Lessons* (*Yanji liujiang*) (1933) was published in 1937. Boleslavsky was a student of Constantin Stanislavski, and his short work, written in the form of a dialogue and divided into six chapters, not only sheds light on the art of acting, but also touches upon stage performers’ transition to screen acting. The translation of Boleslavky’s short work was succeeded by Zheng’s later translation of Stanislavski’s *An Actor Prepares* (*Yanyuan ziwo xiuyang*) (1936), which was interrupted by the Second World War and was not published in China until 1943 (Figure 73-74).[41] In 1947, Zheng published *The Birth of a Role* (*Juese de dansheng*), which is his own treatise on acting based on what he learned from Stanislavski’s *An Actor Prepares* (Figure 75-76).

演員自我修養
史旦尼斯拉夫斯基 著
鄭君里・章泯 合譯
生活・讀書・新知 三聯書店發行



術語中英對照表

A	
Adaptation	適應
Adjustment	調節
Amateurish	業餘的
Art of Representation	再現的藝術
Attention	注意力
C	
Characterization	性格化
Circle of Attention	注意圈
Circumstance	情境
Cliches	刻版
Communion	交流
Concentration of Attention	注意集中
Conscious	意識的
Continuity	連續性
Control and Finish	控制和修飾
Controller of Muscle	筋肉的控制力
Counteraction	對立動作
D	
Detail	細節
E	
Element	元素
Elements of Inner Creative Mood	內在的創造情緒的元素
Elements of the Artist in the Role	藝術家在角色中的元素
Emotion	情緒
Emotion Memory	情緒記憶

Figure 73, 74: Zheng Junli’s translation of Stanislavski’s *An Actor Prepares* (*Yanyuan ziwo xiuyang*) and an appendix of the translation.

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[41] Zheng Junli’s translation of Stanislavski’s *An Actor Prepares* is based on Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood’s English translation, which was published in 1936—even earlier than the publication of the Russian original. For more information on copyrights and the discrepancies between Hapgood’s translation and Stanislavski’s original, see Jean Benedetti (2004).

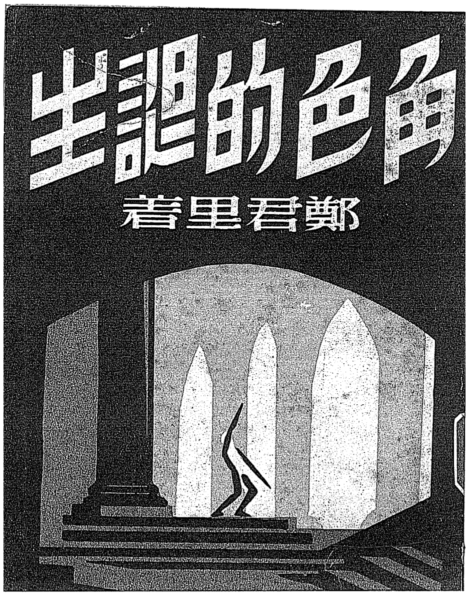

Figure 75, 76: Zheng Junli's *The Birth of a Role* (1947).

Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* became a very influential work in communist China. It was a must-have manual that every performer should read during the decades when Stanislavski's system was openly endorsed in the 1950s and 1960s. Here, I will lay out a number of major elements of Stanislavski's system, which became the basis of screen acting in China during the Seventeen Years.

Principles of Stanislavski's System

Writing in 1963, Zheng Junli comments that the introduction of Stanislavski's system into China posed a solution and tied the loose ends of the two kinds of stage acting proposed by the South China Society and Shanghai Xinyou Drama Troupe—one in which feeling overrides reason, and the other reason over feeling ("Zixu" 68). Stanislavski's system strives to maintain an ideal balance between emotions and conscious technique. I highlight the following basic principles of Stanislavski's system under the tenets of (1) realism, (2) relationship between performers and spectators, and (3) preparation and performance.

1) Realism

- **Belief in the fourth wall**

The premise of Stanislavski's system is the belief in the "fourth wall," which creates an illusion of real life for the audience. The illusion of transparency and of real life laid bare on stage enables spectators to "believe in the very thick of life on stage" (Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* 148). Belief and a sense of truth are crucial to the claim and maintenance of realism. As Stanislavski puts it, "the creative objective should be truthful so that you yourself, the actor playing with you, and your audience can believe in them" (*An Actor Prepares* 112).

2) Relationship between Performers and Spectators

- **Empathy and communion (*jiaoliu*)**

The illusion of real life on stage is the condition by which spectators, absorbed in the play, empathize and identify with performers. As Stanislavsky puts it, "the creative objective should have the quality of attracting and moving you" (*An Actor Prepares* 112). Performers should strive for inter-communication of the dramatis personae and "spiritual communion" with spectators (Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* 193).

3) Preparation and Performance

- **Emphasis on inner emotions**

For Stanislavski, stage performers should "act truthfully" with a "sense of truth" (*zhenshigan*) (*An Actor Prepares* 37). By truthful, Stanislavski refers to the ways in which inner emotions should be felt by stage performers as they enter their roles, so that emotions flow from the inner heart to the outer form: “When the inner conditions are prepared and right, feelings will come to the surface of their own accord” (*An Actor Prepares* 50). Stanislavski opposes age-old theatrical and formalized stage conventions such as “spreading hands over one’s heart to express love” (*An Actor Prepares* 24). Stanislavski calls such an acting method “mechanical acting” (*jixie de yanji*) where performers use ready-made “rubber stamps” and “dead masks of non-existent feelings” to perform their role (*An Actor Prepares* 23).

- **Observation**

To achieve truthfulness of inner emotions, Stanislavski maintains that performers should first of all observe life: “An actor should be observant in real life” and should “look with penetration” (*An Actor Prepares* 86). The purpose of observation is to “get as close to people emotionally as we can, until sympathy for them is transformed into feelings of our own” (Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* 179).

- **Imagination (*xiangxiang*)**

Performers should sharpen their imagination in order to stimulate creativity. Stanislavski defines imagination as “an inner chain of circumstances (*qingjing*) which we ourselves have imagined in order to illustrate our parts” (*An Actor Prepares* 60). Imagination creates “a corresponding mood” and “arouses emotions,” which facilitate performers to enter their role (Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* 60).

- **Emotional memory (*qingxu jiyi*)**

According to Stanislavski, performers should make use of repeated feelings drawn from their emotional memory (*An Actor Prepares* 166). Stanislavski maintains that images from past happenings are easily fixed in our visual memory, which facilitates our imagination.

- **Fusion and duality of performance**

Stanislavski argues that performers should not rely on rare inspirations and lose themselves on stage: “Always act in your own person, as an artist” (*An Actor Prepares* 167). More specifically, a performer should aspire to create a fusion between “I” and his/her role. That is to say, a performer on stage possesses two minds—that of an artist and that of a character. While the character lives his/her emotions on stage, the artist stimulates inspiration through “conscious technique and control” (Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* 47). As Stanislavski puts it succinctly, “an actor lives, weeps, and laughs on the stage, and all the while he is watching his own tears and smiles. It is this double function, this balance between life and acting that makes his art” (*An Actor Prepares* 252). In other words, the duality of performance (free rein of emotions and conscious control) characterizes Stanislavski’s acting method.

Choosing an Actress: The Case of Xie Fang and Zhu Xijuan

In previous sections, I looked at the emergence of the discourse on screen acting and the quest for cinematic realism in early Shanghai cinema in the 1920s and 1930s. The discourse on screen acting distinguished itself from the earlier *xinju* acting style that was perceived as too exaggerative by the 1910s. Central to the quest for realism is the convention of the close-up that gives prominence to the face, resulting in the coinage of screen acting terminology such as facial performance and interior performance. The subscription to Hollywood mimesis and verisimilitude in the discourse on screen acting also coincided with the translation of Stanislavski's system in the mid-1930s.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Stanislavski's system, reinterpreted as a representative work of socialist realism in Soviet Russia, was officially endorsed, accompanied by newer translations of Stanislavski's works based on the Russian originals.[42] In this section, I focus on the training of two prominent Chinese socialist female film stars—Xie Fang and Zhu Xijuan—who enjoyed immense popularity as a result of the success of *Song of Youth* (1959) and *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960) in the later half of the Seventeen Years, when a sophisticated discourse on screen acting had developed. The rise of the two young actresses was unusual and significant in the sense that both of them, with little experience in screen acting, gained immediate success after their debut on screen—unlike other socialist stars such as Zhao Dan, Bai Yang, and Zhang Ruifang, who established their acting credentials during the Republican era. The success of the two young actresses sheds light on how the state trained and cultivated young actresses rather than relying on mature actresses from Republican era. In the following, I look at actresses' reflections and readers' commentaries that constitute socialist star culture.

A few words of clarification are needed here with regard to my focus on film actresses rather than film actors. In the history of Chinese cinema, the female body often functions as a metaphoric representation of the nation and modernity. An illustration published in 1935, titled “Seven Arms and Eight Legs,” comically visualizes the way an actress’s body is attached to various economic and cultural forces (Figure 77). The illustration features an actress’s eroticized figure, whose multiple arms are stretched among journalists, cameramen, film critics, managers, directors, and fans. The actress’s legs on high heels, exposed under the slit of her cheongsam, are riding on two wheels called “fame” and “profit.” The illustration’s treatment of the female star as a subject is telling: far from being an autonomous figure, the actress’s body is tied to various forces and cultural constituencies that lay their eyes on her and grab a hold of her. The suicide of the renowned Chinese actress Ruan Lingyu in 1935 and her character Weiming in *The New Woman* (1934), who in many ways embodies the star’s tragedy, are indicative of the ways in which the female star serves as an iconic figure of modernity.

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[42] In 1963 the Chinese Film Press published the first four volumes of *The Collected Works of Stanislavski* (translated from the Russian original), which include *An Actor Prepares* (Parts I and II) and *Creating a Role.*

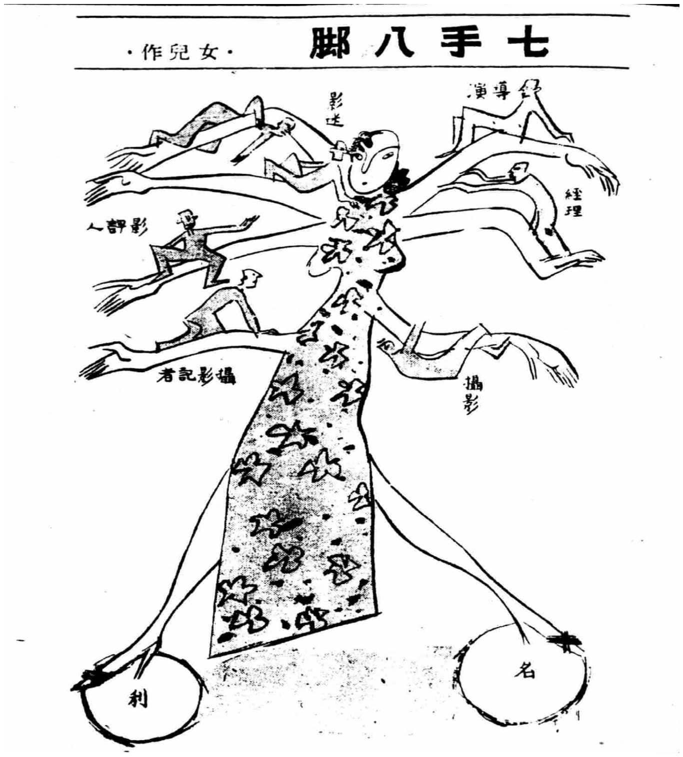

Figure 77: “Seven Arms and Eight Legs” (*qishou bajiao*) (1935).

Earlier in this essay, I briefly talked about the representation of women in early Shanghai cinema in films such as *The Goddess* (1934) and *Twin Sisters* (1933), where the heroines (played by Ruan Lingyu and Hu Die respectively) are often desperate mothers at the lowest stratum of a modernizing society. *The New Woman*, another important film in that era, explicitly puts forward the woman question. The film juxtaposes the image of Weiming, a writer and mother who commits suicide in the end, and Ah Ying, a patriotic school teacher who teaches revolutionary songs. Although the film ends with a positive tone with the image of Ah Ying marching forward, the film puts its spotlight on the tragedy of Weiming and little is said about Ah Ying's journey. One might say that *The New Woman* poses the woman question without really answering it. Who is the new woman? And if the new woman is one like Ah Ying, marching forward and singing revolutionary songs, how should cinema depict the new woman—her image, growth, and transformation as she marches gloriously on the path of revolution?[43]

The cinematic representation of woman was a persistent concern during the Seventeen Years. As Tina Chen suggests, "given the proclivity of Chinese reformers and revolutionaries throughout the twentieth century to symbolize oppressed social groups through the female body, the oppression of women under "feudalism," Confucianism and imperialism marked women as ideal beneficiaries of the new order" ("Female Icons" 289). *The White-Haired Girl* (*Baimaonü*) (Shui Hua and Wang Bin, 1950) and *Zhao Yiman* (Sha Meng, 1950) are two of the earliest efforts to represent positive heroines on screen. The cinematic creation of positive heroines and their socialist glamour reached a heightened sophistication in later films such as *Song of Youth* (1959) and *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960), which feature heroines who commit their lives wholeheartedly to revolution after the death or political arrest of their implied lovers. In those films, positive heroines are at the forefront of the narrative and are endowed with attributes that are absent in their male counterparts.

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[43] There is an extensive existing literature on the "New Woman." See Harris (2008), Guo-juin Hong (2007), and Zhang Zhen (2005).

Why did the directors Cui Wei, Chen Huai'ai, and Xie Jin select two young women with little experience rather than mature stars who had already achieved fame in the Republican era? The directors' decisions to use young actresses were risky undertakings. According to the prominent director Cheng Yin, there were two major ways to select a performer: (1) Choose a performer with the necessary credentials and acting skills; (2) Choose a performer based on his/her physical resemblance to the character ("Xuanze yanyuan" 40). Bai Yang's screen role as Xianglin Sao in *The New Year's Sacrifice* (1956) and Zhao Dan's screen role as Nie Er in *Nie Er* (1958) are examples where performers were chosen based on their acting skills, more so than physical resemblance to their characters. Bai Yang and Zhao Dan were already in their forties when they played the roles of the twenty-something-Xianglin Sao and Nie Er. In contrast, Xie Fang and Zhu Xijuan, both in their twenties when they played their roles, had the physical look of their characters even though they did not have the necessary credentials and experience in screen acting.

In the discourse on screen acting during the Seventeen Years, a distinction was made between instinctive performers (*bense yanyuan*) and personality performers (*xingge yanyuan*). The former refers to performers who play roles similar to their own real-life personalities, whereas the latter refers to performers whose on-screen personalities are remarkably different from their real-life personalities. Xie Fang and Zhu Xijuan, at least in the context of *Song of Youth* and *The Red Detachment of Women*, can be considered as personality performers in the sense that the actresses' on-screen personalities (a suicidal graduate and a hot-blooded slave respectively) are quite different from their real life experience. Whereas Zhao Dan personally knew Nie Er in real life and thus could draw from his memory and life experience, Xie Fang and Zhu Xijuan played fictional roles that belonged to a previous generation. In that sense, Xie Fang's and Zhu Xijuan's screen performances were challenging tasks that required considerable preparation.

The decision to undertake risk and employ new talents was unusual after long years of using experienced actors and actresses who were trained in the Republican era. In the mid-1950s, there emerged criticisms and discontent among actors and especially actresses, who were dissatisfied with the way certain young actresses were favored by directors, so much so that actresses with years of stage experience never got the chance to try their hands in screen acting. In a discussion session organized by the editorial of the film magazine *Chinese Film* (*Zhongguo dianying*) in Beijing in 1957, some stage actresses went so far as to say that even though they could memorize Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares*, their talents, studies, and years of training would go to waste if they were not given an opportunity to act and put into practice what they had learned ("Tingting yanyuan" 13). Some doubted if the way actors and actresses were chosen was just another manifestation of the Hollywood star system—an attractive face was the only thing that mattered ("Tingting yanyuan" 13). Such a debate points to the ambiguous status of film workers in the mid-1950s: should every trained film performer, rather than only a few prominent stars, be given the chance to perform on the silver screen?

The need to invest in a new crop of talent justified the decision to use inexperienced actresses such as Xie Fang and Zhu Xijuan based on their physical resemblance to their characters as sketched in the preexisting novels or screenplays. Equally important is the undeniable fact that most actors and actresses trained in the Republican era aged. Having an experienced performer play a twenty-something jeopardized physical resemblance, which was conceived as a prerequisite for cinematic realism. Moreover, the lack of an already established star identity in Xie Fang and Zhu Xijuan made their screen personae more down-to-earth, refreshing, or even believable as the heroines undergo socialist transformation. The actresses were unfamiliar faces to begin with, and their growth and transformation on screen made them attractive and charismatic to an average audience. Most importantly, investing in Xie Fang and Zhu Xijuan as personality performers can be considered as a courageous undertaking that involved rigorous training and preparation in order to overcome the actresses' lack of experience. In that sense, favoring physical appearance over credentials was not something to be frowned upon—it became a justified necessity and even a daring experiment in screen acting. As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, the prominence of the face persisted and thrived in socialist star culture, precisely because it was given new ideological and aesthetic justifications.

Engendering Socialist Glamour in Positive Heroines

> We do not copy Stanislavski's system in a wholesale manner. . . . We must develop it. In what direction? . . . [Stanislavski's system] should be revolutionized (*geminghua*), nationalized (*minzuhua*), and popularized (*dazhonghua*). Revolutionization refers to the proletariat. Nationalization refers to the Chinese opera tradition. Popularization means serving the workers, peasants, and soldiers (*gongnongbing*). We must look to the superior tradition of spoken drama (*huaju*) and make the foreign serve China (*yangwei zhongyong*). (Huang Zuolin, *Xieyi* 19)

In her brief examination of "the Chinese appropriation of the Stanislavski system," Xiaoning Lu suggests that the "transcultural practice" of Stanislavski's system in China was "never a pure and transparent transmission of the Russian system. It was entangled with various artistic and social missions, and was infused with Chinese artists' creative readings" (118-119). While Lu sheds light on the ways in which Stanislavski's system provided "a set of interpretive strategies" such as "experience" and "fusion" for Chinese cinema during the Seventeen Years, little is said about how Stanislavski's system was transformed by the filmic medium to create pleasure and to engender a different kind of cinematic realism (Xiaoning Lu 118). In the following sections, I argue that in the process of appropriating Stanislavski's system, certain elements of Chinese traditional art were retained (at the level of both rhetoric and practice) in order to (1) create a national cinematic style; (2) renegotiate with the demands of cinematic realism since the Republican era; and (3) create the desire for and pleasure of communion with the Party.

A Performer's Self-cultivation:

From Experience (*tiyan*) to Embodiment and Exemplification (*tixian*)

When Huang Zuolin speaks of the "revolutionization" (*geminghua*), "nationalization" (*minzuhua*), and "popularization" (*dazhonghua*) of Stanislavski's system, he refers to the ways in which Stanislavski's system—an acting method that was developed to serve realism and then socialist realism in Soviet Russia—can be adopted in a different political and cultural context (*Xieyi* 419). Three terms are important for that process to take place in Chinese revolutionary cinema: selection, supplementation, and appropriation. Stanislavski's system was transformed in Chinese revolutionary cinema in two ways: (1) The idea of "experience" and "embodiment" in Stanislavski's system was selected and appropriated with an explicit political motivation to create "a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism." (2) Stanislavski's system, as a system for stage acting, was supplemented to suit the needs of screen acting for the specificity of the filmic medium.

The Chinese translation of Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* literally means "a performer's self-cultivation" (*yanyuan ziwo xiuyang*). The Chinese translation is much closer to the Russian original, which can be in translated into English as "an actor's work on himself" *(*работа актера над собой). As the Russian title suggests, in acting, the object of mimesis and the means of mimesis are both the performer's body—hence, a performer works on him/herself. In the context of Chinese revolutionary cinema during the Seventeen Years, "a performer's work on him/herself" takes on new significance. Acting is a kind of "labor" (*laodong*). A performer's work on him/herself means "self-cultivation” (*ziwo xiuyang*)—and more specifically “political cultivation” (*zhengzhi xiuyang*), which was perceived as a prerequisite for any successful screen performances.

What does it mean when acting is a form of labor that requires political cultivation in a communist society? I suggest that screen acting in Chinese revolutionary cinema involves a series of political cultivation and life experience (*shenghuo tiyan*) that leads to the embodiment and exemplification (*tixian*) of a role—its physical form (*xing*) as well as its spiritual manifestation (*shen*), both of which are central to the creation of charisma of positive heroines. In the following, I will unpack that complex process and look at the ways in which it supplements and appropriates Stanislavski’s system by looking at performers’ reflections, film commentaries, and critical essays on screen acting published during the Seventeen Years.

● *Political cultivation and life experience (shenghuo tiyan)*

“Performers should learn from life” (*yanyuan yao xiang shenghuo taojiao*)—such a saying encapsulates the primary importance of “life” (*shenghuo*) as the “foundation” of a performer’s creative work (Shen Shan 21). “Experience life” (*tiyan shenghuo*) is the first step by which performers learn from the masses and cultivate themselves politically. The Chinese term, *tiyan*, literally means “body” (*ti*) and “experience” (*yan*). “To experience life” involves two processes on the part of performers: (1) lifelong accumulation of experience; (2) going to the countryside for a few months, experiencing life with peasants, workers, and soldiers (*gongnongbing*), engaging in physical labor, and acquiring labor skills (*laodong zhishi*). Observing life, reading, and listening to stories from the masses enabled performers to “absorb” life as much as they can in preparation for their role. As Zhang Ruifang put it: “I think that performers should be like a sponge that is well disposed to absorb anything beneficial in life” (28). Actors and actresses such as Bai Yang, Qin Yi, and Sun Daolin all went to the countryside for a few months to experience life with peasants, workers, and soldiers in preparation for their roles in *The New Year’s Sacrifice* (1956), *Song of Youth* (1959), and *The Unfailing Beam* (*Yongbu xiaoshi de dianbo*) (Wang Ping, 1958). As Xiaoning Lu suggests, going to the countryside allows performers to “learn new gestures, grimaces and other physical movements for performance” (121).

Going to the countryside and experiencing life with peasants, workers, and soldiers served the purposes of the revolutionization (*geminghua*) and popularization (*dazhonghua*) of Stanislavski’s system. While Stanislavski’s system emphasizes observation of everyday life and accumulation of life experience, Chinese revolutionary cinema gave “experiencing life” an explicit political motivation—experiencing life meant learning from peasants, workers, and soldiers as “real-life” models, in order to represent and exemplify those models on screen. If Chinese revolutionary cinema is a cinema that claims to exist *for* the masses, it is also a cinema that claims to originate *from* the masses. In that sense, experiencing life as a form of political cultivation and class education (*jieji jiaoyu*) enhances cinema’s claim to revolutionary realism.

- ***Embodiment and exemplification (tixian)***

The prominent Chinese director Cheng Yin, who studied in Soviet Russia for a year in 1954, uses a gendered metaphor to describe performers’ preparation for their screen roles: the process of preparation is like a “pregnancy” that involves nurturing and eventually the birth of a role ("Daoyan" 100). Metaphors of pregnancy, nurture, and birth evoke the idea of embodiment in acting—from political cultivation and life experience (*shenghuo tiyan*) to the embodiment and exemplification (*tixian*) of a role. The Chinese term, *tixian*, literally means "body" (*ti*) and "manifestation" or "revelation" (*xian*). *Tixian* means to render something visible by giving it an expression through embodiment. In Chinese revolutionary cinema, *tixian* involved not only embodiment and representation, but also the exemplification of a role.

Exemplification requires performers to engage in self-transformation both on and off screen, setting an example for the public to follow. Xiaoning Lu suggests that "fusion" in Stanislavski's system became a "regulatory force" for actors to "engage in self-transformation in accordance with socialist ideology" (120). While Stanislavski speaks of "living a part" (*shenhuo yu juese*) (performers on stage let intuition take over and get completely carried away by the play) and "representing a part" (perfecting an external form and mechanically reproducing that form on stage) as performances that meet the requirements of realism, in Chinese revolutionary cinema, "living a part" and "representing a part" on stage were not sufficient (Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* 12-18). Chinese revolutionary cinema was a cinema that strived not only to represent, but also to exemplify—to exemplify a role model as an ideal, a type, and an individual. In short, to experience life (*tiyan shenghuo*) and to "embody and exemplify an ideal" (*tixian lixiang*) were the cornerstones of screen acting in Chinese revolutionary cinema (Zhao 38).

How do performers merge with their roles and achieve embodiment and exemplification, provided that they have cultivated themselves through reading, observing, and absorbing life as much as they can? Imagination, emotion memory, and fusion—all of which are important elements of Stanislavski's system—are the next steps by which performers immerse in (*jinru*) and merge with their roles (*rongru juese*) in Chinese revolutionary cinema. Stanislavski defines imagination as "an inner chain of circumstances which we ourselves have imagined in order to illustrate our parts" (*An Actor Prepares* 60). In Chinese revolutionary cinema, imagination and emotional memory take on a political and class nature—collective memory of revolution often arouses performers' creative mood in preparing for their roles.

For example, Xie Fang speaks of using "visual image and sound to enrich interior activities" (*neixin huodong*) when performing her role as Lin Daojing in *Song of Youth* (33). Xie notes that in the scene when she opens a package and sees fliers with mottos of the Communist Party that Lu Jiachuan has given her, the director required her to stand up in solemnity: "The movement should be very solemn, supported by transcendent emotions (*chonggao de ganqing*). My heart sings the *Internationale*, and my body stands up naturally. An actress must have an extremely rich interior world (*neixin shijie*)" (33). In the scene, Xie's transition from imagination to embodiment is accompanied by a series of visual images and sounds, which are depicted cinematically. For example, Xie's inner vision of her mentor Lu Jiachuan is depicted cinematically through medium close-up shots of her facial performance superimposed with Lu

Jiachuan's image. Here, imagination, inner vision, and embodiment are visualized on screen in a highly condensed manner through the use of montage (Figure 78).

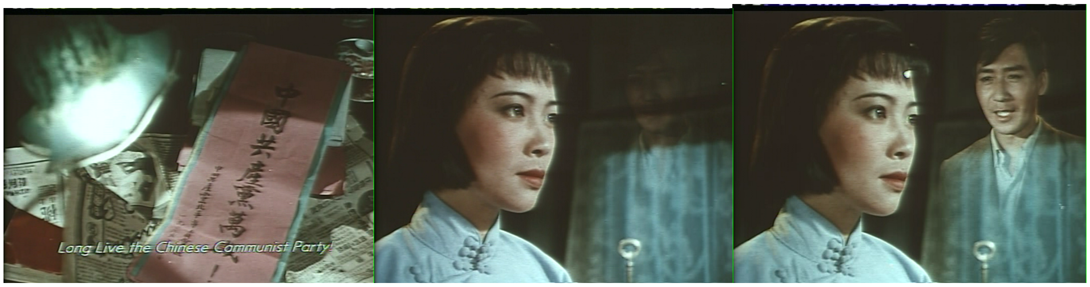
Long Live the Chinese Communist Party!

Figure 78: Xie Fang speaks of using "visual image and sound to enrich interior activities" (neixin huodong) when performing her role as Lin Daojing in *Song of Youth* (1959) (33).

Xie describes the climactic sequence of the film when the heroine is admitted to the Party in the following manner:

> It is a long sequence without speech. It is as if I saw a bright and colorful rainbow and a group of people marching with red flags and flowers toward a golden and shining gate. I saw the familiar faces of Lu Jiachuan and Lin Hong. They were smiling and nodding at me in congratulations. Without that chain of imagination and visual images, my interior world would have been a blank. (Xie 33)

Through imagination and the chain of inner vision, both of which are important elements in Stanislavski's system, Xie Fang merges with her role. It should be noted that such a moment is depicted in a series of close-up shots of Xie's socialist realist gaze (a static gaze that points to an off-screen space without a defined diegetic object, signaling the character's political enlightenment), which maximize empathy and communion with the Party—the focus of the following sections.

Adapting Stanislavski's System for Screen Acting:

The Close-up and Cinematic Depiction of Small Details

The previous sections examined how performers move from experience to embodiment. This section looks at how the use of the close-up intensifies emotional affect and exemplifies the positive heroine as both a type and an individual. I suggest that the cinematic depiction of small details strengthens and exemplifies the image of positive heroines, transforming Stanislavski's system for the specificity of the filmic medium.

The emphasis on detail in Stanislavski's system takes on new significance in Chinese revolutionary cinema. While Stanislavski's emphasis on small details has its roots in Russian literary realism in the 19th century—more specifically Anton Chekhov, the emphasis on detail in Stanislavski's system is recreated through the use of the close-up in Chinese revolutionary cinema. In the discourse on screen acting during the Seventeen Years, cinema was conceived as an art with the highest degree of realism. It was said that realism necessitates concrete depiction of small details, and film, among all other arts, has the best ability to visualize details with the highest degree of precision and clarity: "Small details and concrete depiction are even more important in film because of its visual nature (*shijuexing*)" (Lu Jianhua 61). Critic Lu Jianhua argued that only film could capture the most delicate details of life such as "a twitch of the eye" and "a teardrop rolling down from watery eyes" (62). Quoting Béla Balázs, Lu maintained that "the most significant event in life is a result of the movement of small elements" (Lu Jianhua 62). Lu goes on and suggests that the cinematic depiction of small details gives flesh and blood to a character: "If conflict is the foundation of a film, and plot its bones, then concrete depiction of small details is the flesh and blood of a film. A human being cannot stand without bones. He cannot be a living man without flesh and blood" (Lu Jianhua 62). In other words, the cinematic depiction of detail is that which enlivens the image of a character.

The concrete depiction of small details not only enlivens the character, but also typifies (*dianxinghua*) as well as individualizes (*gexinghua*) the image of positive heroines. While positive heroines are ultimately politically correct by the end of a film, their images are never uniformly flattened or dry. Although they share similar paths of apprenticeship and growing political consciousness, positive heroines are not all the same in temperament. In the discourse on the "typical" and the "individual" in the late 1950s, a type (*dianxing*) was defined as "a unification between commonality (*gongxing*) and individuality" (*gexing*) (Yi 22). It was argued that the concrete depiction of small details enhanced the individuality of a character, who would otherwise become ordinary (*yibanhua*). That is to say, without individuality, a type would become too ordinary and cease to be entertaining.

The close-up, as a means to enhance individuality, was not limited to actresses' faces only. The close-up was also used to depict objects endowed with symbolic value and meanings that were both personal and public. For instance, In *The Red Detachment of Women*, the map that Changqing uses to educate Qionghua, the coins from Changqing, and Qionghua's fist holding the coins were all perceived by film critics as details that were given powerful cinematic expressions through the close-up (Figure 79-80). In *Song of Youth*, the martyr Lin Hong's comb and red sweater, which are passed on to Lin Daojing, are considered small details that enhance Lin Daojing's image as a young revolutionary full of promise and worthy of the sacrifices of martyrs (Figure 81). The use of details depicted in close-up gives the screen "emotive power" (*ganran liliang*) (Lu Jianhua 63). The concrete depiction of details finds its theoretical support in Engels's definition of realism: "the realism of small details is crucial to the expression of a typical character in a typical environment" (Chu 58). The realism of details is "higher than life, more concentrated, and more powerful" (Chu 58). The use of the close-up to depict details visually recreates in the filmic medium Stanislavski's emphasis on small details in performance and exemplifies the image of positive heroines as both a type and an individual.

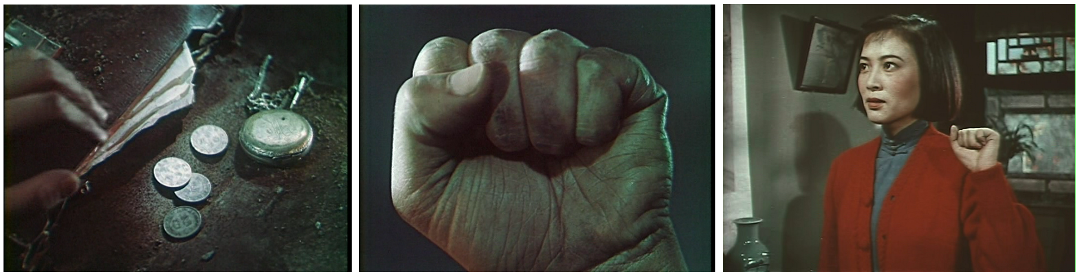

Figure 79-81: The cinematic depiction of small details in *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960) and *Song of Youth* (1959).

Bringing the Painted Dragon to Life: The Prominence of the Eyes

In addition to the cinematic depiction of detail, the faces and eyes of positive heroines were given special attention in Chinese revolutionary cinema. Much of the cinematic creation of socialist charisma harkens back to the prominence of the face in early Shanghai cinema, but with a different emphasis and ideological motivation. In the late 1950s, there emerged a discussion and emphasis on the "air" (*qizhi*) and "spiritual features" (*jingshen mianmao*) that a protagonist exudes (Zhu 47). It was said that a character is not complete without both "form" (*xing*) and "spirit" (*shen*) (Zhu 41). While physical form is something that is visible on screen, “spirit” and “air” are much more intangible and elusive. Central to the manifestation of “spirit” and “air” were the eyes of positive heroines, as encapsulated in the saying, “the eyes manifest the spirit” (*meimu chuanshen*).

The emphasis on the eyes goes back to interior performance and facial performance, which, as described earlier, were established as equivalents as a result of the prevalent use of the close-up in early Shanghai cinema. Interestingly, the emphasis on the eyes also goes back to the Chinese theatrical tradition. For instance, Dong Xinyu suggests the term “meeting of the eyes” (*dui yanshen* or *dui yanguang*) as a “proto-cinematic Kun opera gesture” that retrieved the repertoire of theatrical gestures to visualize Peking opera on screen (200). The “symbiosis between opera and cinema” as a result of the shared emphasis on the eyes sheds light on the ways in which the prominence of the eyes (such as the relay of gazes and the socialist realist gaze) in Chinese revolutionary cinema reinvigorated the Chinese opera tradition (Dong 209).

The emphasis on the eyes in traditional theater even came to be conceived as sharing an affinity with cinematic conventions such as the close-up. Jiao Juyin, speaking about Chinese traditional theater in the early 1960s, linked conventions in traditional theater with the close-up and the camera movement of “tracking in”: “The traditional theater has many techniques for creating prominence or spotlight, something similar to close-ups in films. For instance, bringing two people to the very front of the stage is kind of like a close-up or ‘zooming in’” (162). In Peking opera, *liangxiang*, or “striking a pose”—a combination of a “frozen” pose and a gaze—brings forward the prominence of the protagonists, who hold the attention of the audience with their eyes: “The actors in traditional theater . . . are very particular about and very good at using their eyes. They can use their eyes to ‘lead’ the audience. When an actor points and says, ‘you look,’ his eyes are following the tip of his pointing finger” (Jiao 163). The combination of *liangxiang* with close-up shots of the socialist realist gaze in revolutionary model operas (*yangbanxi*) produced during the Cultural Revolution illustrates the creative ways in which theatrical conventions that highlight the eyes, such as *liangxiang*, were given cinematic expression.[44]

Let us turn to an instructive example illustrating the use of the close-up to feature heroines’ eyes. In a remarkable montage sequence in *Song of Youth*, Lin Daojing is depicted in a series of close-up shots as she is enthralled by the Soviet novel *The Iron Flood* (*Tieliu*). The montage sequence culminates in a close-up shot of the heroine’s eyes, followed by an empty shot (a shot that depicts scenery only and functions as pauses succeeding cinematic climaxes) of blooming flowers against the blue sky (Figure 82). The close-up of the heroine’s eyes is suggestive of her psychological activity: the book opens up a new world to Lin. This is a case where the prominence of the eyes mobilizes camera movement and montage, strengthening the spiritual features of the positive heroine without reliance on speech.

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[44] See McGrath (2010).

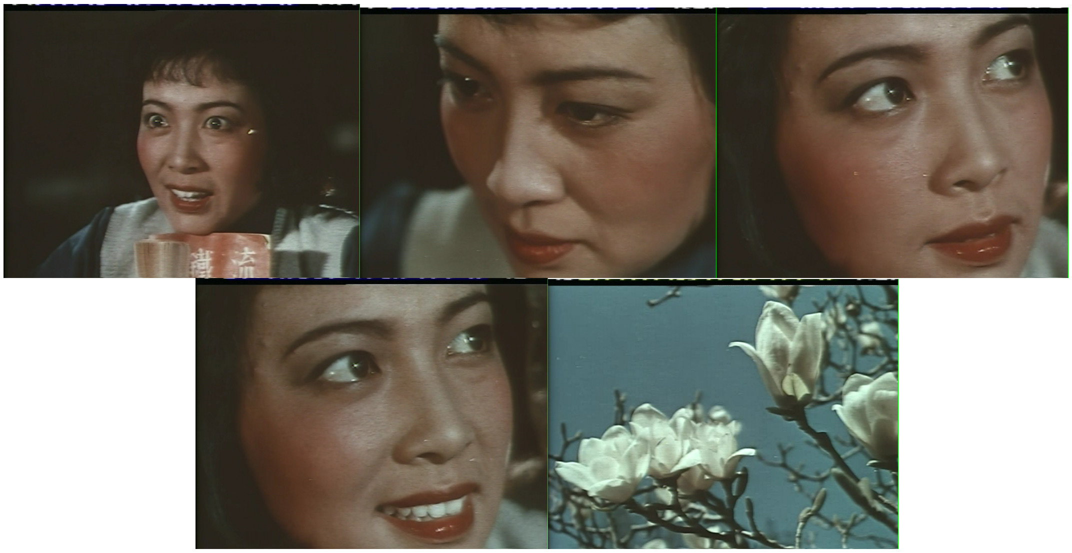

Figure 82: The cinematic technique of “dotting the eyeballs” in *Song of Youth* (1959).

It is also notable that special effort was made to ensure the brightness and shining quality of the eyes of positive heroines. In the discourse on photography in Chinese revolutionary cinema in the late 1950s, positive heroes and heroines were compared to painted dragons. The act of “dotting the eyeballs” (*hualong dianjing*) adds a critical and finishing touch that is said to bring the painted dragons to life (Zhu 46). “Dotting the dragon’s eyeballs,” an artistic metaphor going back to the Chinese painting tradition, became a photographic technique that was used to enhance the eyes of positive heroes and heroines. In critical sequences that featured close-up shots of heroes’ and heroines’ eyes, special effort was made to ensure that a singular sparkle (as a result of reflection from source of light) appeared in the pupil of the eye:

> Normally, there is only one bright spot in a pupil. However, there are many sources of light in the studio. When the lights are reflected in the characters’ eyes, several white spots appear in the pupils, which damage the gaze (*yanshen*) of the character. As a result, the gaze (*muguang*) is

> dispersed. . . .We should change the position of lighting and aim for the proper reflection of a bright spot in a character's eye. . . . We can also spot the light on the pupil with a suitable angle, so that the character comes to life. (Zhu 47)

Here, the Chinese terms for "eyes" (*yan*, or *mu*) are associated with the terms "spirit" (*shen*) and "light" (*guang*). The "shining dot" in the pupil was perceived as that which enlivened the spirit of the politically enlightened positive heroes and heroines. It was thus part of the air, charm, and magnetism that positive heroes and heroines were expected to exude.

Socialist Glamour: "Painting with Light"

The cinematic act of "dotting the eyeballs" involved the use of the close-up and specific choices of lighting. Interestingly, in the history of Hollywood filmmaking, cinematography was also associated with painting. The American Society of Cinematographers defines cinematography as "painting with light" (Keating 5). In his study of Hollywood lighting from the silent era to film noir, Patrick Keating suggests that lighting, although often going "unseen" and "unnoticed," enhances storytelling and characterization, adds realistic detail, and "astonishes the eye with pictorial beauty" and glamour (1, 9). Cinematography, as a kind of painting with light, creates glamour and often makes positive heroines outshine their male counterparts with their brightness and vivacity on the silver screen.

Lighting often operates along gender divides in visual representations ranging from portraiture to film. In portraits and the close-up in Hollywood silent film, various lighting conventions are mobilized to enhance characterization and accentuate features that are constructed as gender-specific. For instance, delicacy of complexion is usually associated with females, whereas strong contrast of light and dark is usually associated with males. As Keating puts it: “A woman’s face would feature ‘gentle’ gradations, while a man’s face would express virility with stronger contrasts” (128). More specifically, low contrast lighting would smooth out facial features of a female subject, and a frontal light would eliminate wrinkles that may have been more apparent with side-lighting. Keating uses the hyper-aestheticized and heavily diffused close-ups of Lillian Gish in *Way Down East* (D.W. Griffith, 1920) as an example to illustrate the way in which low contrast, soft, and frontal lighting enhances pictorial beauty, glamour, and characterization. Moreover, according to Keating, backlighting was often used with lens diffusion, which intensifies the “halo” effect by making the edges of blond hair glow, for example (46). The aforementioned gender-specific lighting conventions succeeded in enhancing glamour in the Hollywood silent era, so much so that “some female stars began to request heavy diffusion on all their shots” (Keating 44).

In early Shanghai cinema, similar lighting conventions were employed to accentuate the glamour of female stars such as Ruan Lingyu and Hu Die. For example, in a series of close-ups and extreme close-ups in *Twin Sisters* (1933) and *The Goddess* (1934), low contrast, soft, and frontal lighting is used to emphasize femininity and the delicacy of complexion of the actresses at the best of their careers (Figure 83-84). Here, interior performance and facial performance, combined with the use of the close-up and lighting, enhances the acting and glamour of the stars. In terms of narrative and characterization, the two films deserve attention in the sense that both of them feature a prominent female star who takes on two remarkably different identities in the narrative: Ruan Lingyu plays the role of a mother-prostitute (who switches between high fashion and plain clothing throughout the film), whereas Hu Die plays the roles of twin sisters (Dabao the desperate mother and Erbao the wealthy mother). Through the stars' dual role, the films portray the lives of the downtrodden and convey various social issues, while at the same time maximizing the opportunity to enhance the glamour of the two stars.

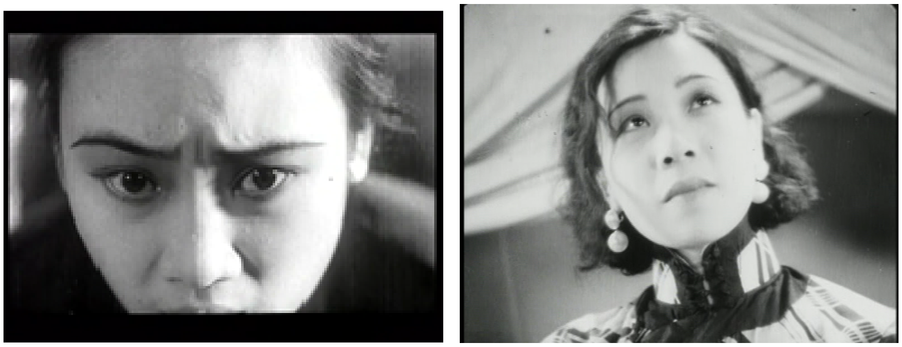

Figure 83, 84: Low contrast, soft, and frontal lighting is used to emphasize femininity and the delicacy of complexion of Hu Die and Ruan Lingyu at the best of their careers.

Keating argues that in as early as the 1900s, lighting in photography was conceived to have the ability to capture character and even "peer into the soul" of a subject (35). Here, "character" is not to be confused with "appearance": "Appearances may change from moment to moment, but each subject has a more-or-less consistent character" (Keating 34-35). In his 1907 book *Art and the Camera*, Antony Guest suggested that the camera should strive to capture character, rather than to achieve likeness and "mere similitude" (Keating 34). The acting career and screen persona of Ruan Lingyu is an example where a consistent character (as the new woman and an iconic figure of modernity) is established as a result of the complex interplay between screen acting, cinematography, characterization, glamour, and the larger social issues in modernizing Shanghai. In the context of Chinese revolutionary cinema in the late 1950s, the emphasis on capturing "character" and "spirit" (*shen*) rather than "appearance" and physical form (*xing*) took on new significance in light of the effort to create a "combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism," as proposed by Mao in 1958.

The privileging and prominence of the faces of film stars persisted and thrived in socialist star culture with new ideological and aesthetic motivations. The prominence of the face, and especially the eyes, became a means by which the camera and the eyes of the audience peer into the "spirit" (*shen*) of positive heroes and heroines, who have exclusive access to the sublime truth of the Party. In *Song of Youth*, Lin Daojing (played by Xie Fang) is often depicted in close-ups with low-contrast, soft, and frontal lighting that accentuates her femininity and glamour. In one of the most calming moments of the film, when Lin conveys to her friend her new joy and commitment to the revolution, Lin, with a slightly upturned chin as her eyes gaze at the horizon, is depicted in a close-up (also a low-angle shot) as she speaks. The sky at dusk provides a natural backlight and creates a "halo" effect that adds glamour to the heroine (Figure 85). Here, lighting establishes a soothing mood and evokes the romance of revolution. In the most solemn moment of the film, when Lin is admitted to the Party, she is depicted in a medium shot as she vows loyalty to the Party. Lin's make-up, red cheeks, and the red sweater that the martyr Lin Hong passed on to her add color to the heroine's image and enhance glamour in a way clearly marked as socialist and “red.” In addition, the use of backlight creates shadows and patterns in the interior and makes Lin’s hair glow (Figure 86). Such use of lighting, as in the aforementioned close-up shot of Lin, not only evokes the solemnity and romance of revolution, but also aestheticizes the image of the positive heroine.

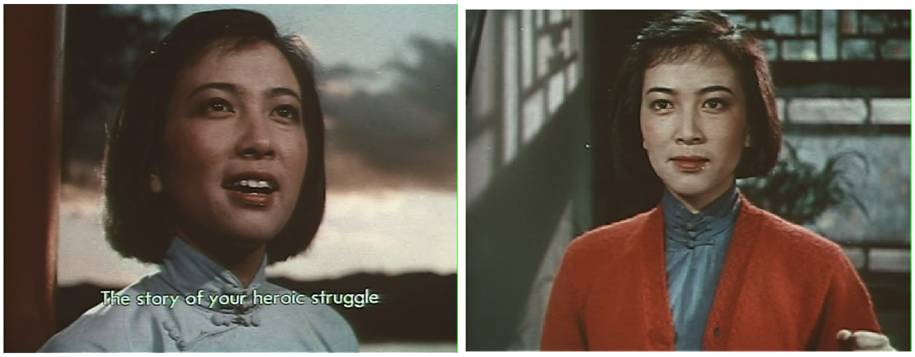
The story of your heroic struggle

Figure 85, 86: The use of backlighting and the “halo” effect in *Song of Youth* (1959).

It is worth noting that none of the male actors in *Song of Youth* is given such an aestheticized treatment. They either recede to the background (Lin’s former mentor and the martyr Lu Jiachuan) or do not shine as much (Lin’s later mentor Jiang Hua) as the positive heroine takes on a prominent role as the vanguard of the revolution. Katerina Clark suggests the terms “the structure of apprenticeship” and “the structure of confrontation” as ways to understand Soviet socialist realist fiction: “The novel of socialist realism is a novel of work, with a hero who gives himself a task; he will join with allies; he will meet with opponents” (257). In the case of *Song of Youth*, the heroine replaces the hero in Clark’s statement. According to Clark, Soviet fiction often situates protagonists in “the tension between spontaneity and consciousness” as the protagonists learn to discipline themselves under the guidance of mentors on the path to transformation (K. Clark 259). In *Song of Youth*, Lin Daojing evolves from an ignorant youth to a new Party member under the guidance of her mentor (and implied lover)

Jiang Hua, who functions as a supporting character rather than a hero in Lin's apprenticeship. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the figure of the woman functions as a more effective icon of revolution and modernity, taking into account the metaphoric representation of woman as nation in the history of Chinese cinema.

In *Song of Youth*, Lin Daojing is the only character with a prolonged socialist realist gaze. In a montage sequence that juxtaposes the Party flag with Lin's socialist realist gaze, a close-up of Lin is combined with frontal and back lighting that smoothes out her facial features and makes her hair glow (Figure 87). The cinematic technique of "dotting the eyeballs" makes Lin's watery eyes shine—they shine even more so because of the somewhat dim lighting in the interior. As a result of make-up and lighting, Lin's firmness of will, expressed by her silent facial and interior performance, is combined with feminine softness. This is an aestheticized moment when the socialist glamour of the positive heroine shines through; "socialism" and "glamour," far from being mutually exclusive, cannot exist without one another.

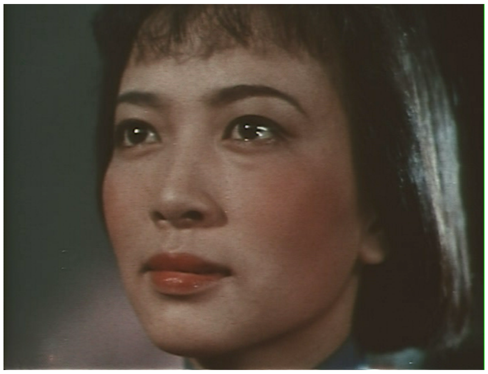

Figure 87: Lin Daojing's watery eyes shine as a result of the cinematic act of "dotting the eyeballs."

The socialist glamour, charm, and magnetism that positive heroines exude attracted and infected spectators at the level of the senses and supplied visual and even erotic pleasure. In her study of film and gender in Sino-Soviet exchange, Tina Chen suggests that “love, desire, and sexuality were not erased or censored to the point of erasure,” and that “the masses learned about love and sexuality in part through the cultural products on display” (“International Circuits of Gender” 58, 78). With their glamour, positive heroes and heroines served as socialist exemplars and facilitated the socialist redefinition of love and sexuality. Chen uses the kissing moment witnessed by Stalin in the ending of the Soviet film *The Fall of Berlin* (*Padenie Berlina*) (Mikheil Chiaureli, 1949) to demonstrate what she calls the “triangulation of legitimate love” and the “triangulation of male-female-party” that are also seen in Chinese films such as *The White-Haired Girl* (1950) (Tina Chen, “Film and Gender” 438). I argue that in *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960), the triangulation of legitimate love is given new expressions at both the narrative and visual levels for ideological and entertainment purposes.

When she speaks of the “triangulation of legitimate love” and the “triangulation of male-female-party,” Tina Chen refers to the ways in which Soviet films “produce” and “police” personal emotions linked to sexualized bodies (“Film and Gender” 441). For instance, *The Fall of Berlin* ends with Russia’s victory and the reunion of the couple, Alyosha and Natasha, who embrace and kiss each other in the presence of Stalin. The inclusion of romance and personal emotions brings the narrative to a fruitful end without jeopardizing the status of Stalin. In his study of socialist realism, Régine Robin suggests that Soviet socialist realist fictions typically have a “basic narrative paradigm” and a “secondary narrative paradigm”: the former introduces “a goal in the public sphere and in collective life," whereas the latter introduces "the characters' private lives," which "often leave something to be desired" (259). In the context of *The Fall of Berlin*, revolution (basic narrative paradigm) and romance (secondary narrative paradigm) are interweaved, similar to the dual prominence of romance and work typical of classical Hollywood narration.[45]

Unlike Soviet films produced during the Thaw period, Chinese revolutionary cinema during the Seventeen Years typically lacked overt physical touch (the romantic embrace between Nie Er and his lover is an exception). Romance is hinted at occasionally through the shot/reverse-shot convention (as discussed in chapter two and three) to indulge the audience in pleasure for a moment until the revolutionary goal is accomplished through sublimation. What is unusual about *The Red Detachment of Women* is the introduction of implied and unfulfilled romance (in the form of the mentorship and the death of the male lead Hong Changqing), which leaves something to be desired and therefore, I would argue, enriches the charisma of positive heroines and the status of the Party.

Robin argues that the positive hero, figured in the realist aesthetic in Soviet socialist realist fiction, "is by definition a failure on the aesthetic level," because the "thesis effect" dominates the aesthetic, literary, or what he calls the "text effect" (292-293). Robin describes Soviet socialist realist fiction as "roman a these," which "conveys explicit messages" and "a moral" (250). Roman a these, according to Robin, is "didactic in intent, seeking to demonstrate the validity of a political, philosophical or religious doctrine;" it seeks to "persuade or convince" with a narration that "blocks all multivalent readings" (250). While Robin is correct in highlighting the ideological function of socialist realist fiction, what goes unconsidered is the possibility that the thesis effect and text effect can complement each other. In the context of Chinese revolutionary cinema, implied and unfulfilled romance creates pleasure, glamour, and aesthetic effects (text effect) in the secondary narrative paradigm and enhances the thesis effect of the primary narrative paradigm.

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[45] See Bordwell (1986).

In *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960), the death of the martyr Changqing, Qionghua's mentor and implied lover, channels Qionghua's political and emotional devotion from the positive hero to the Party. The death of the positive hero completes and heightens, rather than nullifies, the triangulation of legitimate love and the triangulation of male-female-party, for the Party embodies the beliefs and values of the positive hero and becomes the sole locus of love and memory.

On the visual level, the socialist realist gaze of the positive heroine is the lens through which the sublime truth is seen and is thus the locus of attraction and charisma. In the film script, Qionghua's eyes are described as "fiery"—Qionghua's eyes reflect her hatred for the evil landlord Nan Batian and her burning impulse to seek revenge. Qionghua's fiery eyes and hot-blooded personality are given cinematic expression in the scene where she witnesses Changqing's execution in darkness (Figure 88-90). Qionghua's sweaty face, depicted in an extreme close-up, is accentuated by a light reflected on her forehead, which creates shadows on her unsmooth, distorted, and even unattractive and unfeminine face. The cinematic technique of "dotting the eyeballs," combined with Zhu Xijuan's frowning eyebrows and her facial and interior performance, puts the spotlight on Qionghua’s eyes and what she sees—the soon-to-be executed Changqing. In the next shot, special lighting, which fills almost the entire shot, is used to recreate the reflection of fire flames at the execution site as Qionghua overlooks the execution behind a tree from afar. Here, the use of lighting and the cinematic technique of “dotting the eyeballs” visually recreate Qionghua’s fiery agitation and hatred for the class enemy.

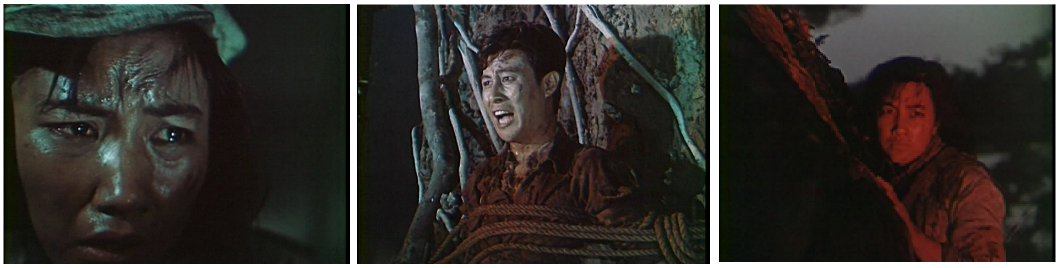

Figure 88-90: Qionghua’s fiery agitation is recreated by the use of lighting.

The cinematic creation of Qionghua as the positive heroine subverts the conventional dichotomy between masculine hardness and feminine softness. Without bourgeois fashion and glamorous make-up, Qionghua, with her sweaty and oily face, nonetheless draws the audience in with her fiery eyes as the locus of her charisma. Qionghua’s firmness of will (a quality usually associated with masculinity) is conveyed through facial performance, the socialist realist gaze, and gestures such as her clenched fist orchestrated by montage. In the montage sequence, Qionghua’s socialist realist gaze in extreme-close up is superimposed with her Party application. The superimposition brightens Qionghua’s face in a moment of enlightenment (Figure 91-93). Such climactic moments, McGrath argues, are on the verge of “cinematic formalism”—orchestrated by montage, the heroines’ interior and facial performances are increasingly standardized (“Model Opera Films” 344). McGrath argues that such moments anticipate the socialist realist gaze combined with *liangxiang* in revolutionary model operas (*yangbanxi*) produced during the Cultural Revolution. The combination of Stanislavski's realist acting method, the socialist realist gaze, the cinematic technique of "dotting the eyeballs," and montage together build the charisma of positive heroines, creating attractive models for emulation and supplying the visual, erotic, and political pleasures of communion with the Party (achieved in part through the sacrifice of the positive hero).

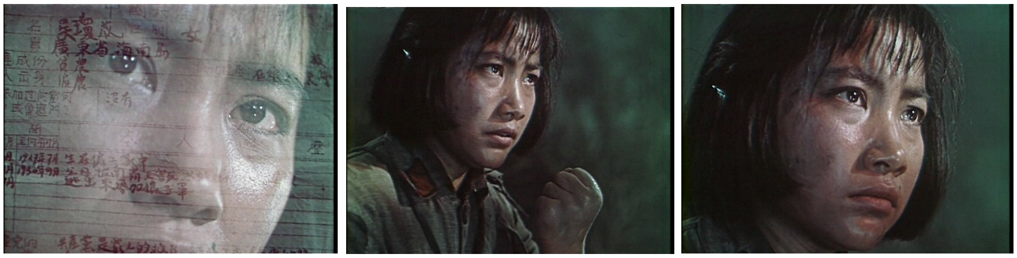

Figure 91-93: Qionghua's leap to political consciousness in *The Red Detachment of Women* (1960).

A Combination of *Xieshi* and *Xieyi*:

A Combination of Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism

> Generally speaking, there are two theater aesthetics (*xijuguan*): an aesthetics that creates an illusion of real life and an aesthetics that eliminates the illusion of real life; that is to say, the aesthetics of *xieshi* and the aesthetics of *xieyi*—as well as a combination of *xieshi* and *xieyi* aesthetics (*xieshi xieyi hunhe de xijuguan*). (Huang Zuolin, *Daoyan de hua* 183)

As described above, the cinematic technique of "dotting the eyeballs" enhances glamour and evokes the Chinese painting tradition as well as the opera tradition, in which the eyes play a prominent role and enliven the spirit of the subject portrayed. Why is the "spirit" manifested by the eyes so much emphasized in the aesthetic realm, regardless of the artistic medium—whether it is pictorial art, theater, or film?

The persistent emphasis on capturing the "spirit" arises from the idea of "*xieyi*," defined by the dramatist Huang Zuolin as capturing the "essence" ("On Mei Lanfang" 158). Huang describes Xu Beihong's painted horses as "over and above the real" and suggests that the Chinese painter is preoccupied with "the essence rather than the appearance of things" (Huang Zuolin, "On Mei Lanfang" 158). Hence, Huang defines *xieyi* as "essentialism" (original in English), as opposed to "realism" (*xieshi*), which he sees as the foundation of Western art: "If the key to Western art is realism, what then is the essence of traditional Chinese art? It is difficult to find an antonym. In Chinese we have a word for it— *xieyi*, but I have not been able to find its English equivalent" (Huang Zuolin, "On Mei Lanfang" 157). According to Huang, *xieyi* is also the underlying basis of formalized stage conventions (*chengshi*) in traditional Chinese theater. For example, the "imaginary yet convincing pantomime and postures that help the actors to create and communicate with the nonmaterial physical environment" are examples of formalized stage conventions that strive to capture the essence rather than the material reality and appearance of life (A 150). For Huang, *xieshi* "originates from life" (*shenghuo*), whereas *xieyi* is "higher than life"—*xieyi* "refines, concentrates, and typifies life" (Huang Zuolin, *Xieyi* 421).

The effort to adapt Stanislavski's system in Chinese revolutionary cinema fulfills the longstanding demands of cinematic realism since the Republican era, especially since Stanislavski's system, as mentioned earlier in this essay, rejects any kind of age-old theatrical and formalized stage conventions. The belief in the fourth wall also creates an illusion of real life that facilitates spectators' absorption. However, in the discourse on the combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism, the idea of *xieyi* as the basis of formalized stage conventions (*chengshi*) in traditional Chinese theater is brought up once again in an effort to renegotiate the longstanding quest for cinematic realism with the Chinese opera tradition. As Huang Zuolin puts it as he speaks of the adoption of Stanislavski's system: "Nationalization [of Stanislavski's system] refers to the Chinese opera tradition" (*Xieyi* 419). By this, Huang means that nationalization of Stanislavski's system involves a re-engagement and reinvigoration of the Chinese opera tradition. Huang's statement points to an attempt to create a fusion between *xieshi* and *xieyi*: "The theater aesthetics of *xieyi* is the creative method of a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism" (Huang Zuolin, *Xieyi* 421). The evocation of a utopia through the highly formalist socialist realist gaze of positive heroines exceeds the demands of revolutionary realism and verges on revolutionary romanticism.

Conclusion

I have discussed the ways in which the figure of the positive heroine is a site where discourses on screen acting and realism, cinematic transformation of Stanislavski's system, the engendering of socialist glamour, and the discourse on the new woman converge. As a result of the introduction of romance and the martyrdom of positive heroes, positive heroines are not only socialist exemplars but also serve as a locus of visual, erotic, and political pleasure of identification and communion with the Party.

Interestingly, while Stanislavski's system was the primary mode of screen acting during the Seventeen Years, aspects that are usually associated with the Hollywood star system—the prominence of the face and the gendered use of lighting to create glamour—operate in Chinese revolutionary cinema. My discussion of socialist glamour establishes a dialogue with Republican cinema, where female film stars embody the contradictions of modernity and metaphorically stand for the nation. The cinematic creation of glamour as a continuity between Republican and socialist cinema raises central questions pertaining to cinema as a social project—questions of cinematic realism in mediating social reality, the redefinition of love and sexuality in a new society, and the status and training of women as film workers.

The experiment in using young actresses such as Xie Fang and Zhu Xijuan allowed the directors to create novel star identities from scratch and to capitalize on the actresses' physical appearance. In the actresses' on screen performances, Stanislavski's system was not only remolded under the ideological conditions of communist China, but also supplemented and transformed vis-à-vis the Chinese opera tradition (the prominence of the eyes) as well as mechanical reproduction (and more specifically montage that orchestrates acting, close-ups of the socialist realist gaze, empty shots, and sound).

In this project, I have focused on scriptwriting (chapter 2), montage (chapter three), and screen acting (chapter 4) in understanding the creation of a Chinese revolutionary film aesthetics. Chinese revolutionary cinema creatively maneuvered between various cinematic precedents (both Soviet and Hollywood) in an effort to create pleasure and attractions that were visual, aural, kinesthetic, erotic, and political. In doing so, Chinese revolutionary cinema renegotiated with the May Fourth literary tradition, various acting traditions, and the operatic tradition. This project ends with the figure of the positive heroine, for it is through her eyes that a socialist future was imagined.

Epilogue

Heroism vs. Humanism

In this project, I trace the evolution of a heightened sense of heroism—from the melodramatic mode of film adaptations that depict a bygone feudal society to war films, biographical films, and fictional films featuring positive heroines. The cinematic evolution of a heightened sense of heroism also coincided with the evolving discourse on realism—from May Fourth social realism to neorealism, socialist realism, and a combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. Paul Clark describes the latter half of the "Seventeen Years" as moving towards the "sinification" of film, characterized by the acknowledgement of the May Fourth literary tradition and pre-modern popular cultural traditions (56). The gesturing toward China's operatic tradition in the latter half of the Seventeen Years anticipated the aesthetics of model opera films *(yangbanxi*) produced during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The standardized cinematic combination of the socialist realist gaze and *liangxiang* (striking a pose) in model opera films brought forward the prominence of positive heroes and heroines, so much so that it culminated in what Jason McGrath calls a "formalist drift"—an aesthetic shift away from realism to formalism that already had been well under way before the Cultural Revolution ("Model Opera Films" 344). The Seventeen Years before the Cultural Revolution—also the "missing years" in current scholarship—is crucial in putting into the perspective the historical continuities and discontinuities of Chinese film aesthetics and cultural discourse. The heightened sense of heroism before and during the Cultural Revolution was followed by a profound search for humanism in postsocialist China, as reflected in the post-revolutionary turn to André Bazin's notion of cinematic realism for theoretical guidance. The use of the long take, on-location shooting, and avoidance of montage in postsocialist Chinese cinema (such as Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* [1984] and Jia Zhangke's films) created a new kind of aestheticized realism that focused on the ordinary human rather than the hero, therefore subverting previous revolutionary conventions. A critical study of the Seventeen Years allows us to look at the winding trajectories of realism and the search for a cultural hero in a Chinese revolutionary discourse that would peak and then quickly decline not long afterward.

Propaganda and Pleasure

In his study of Chinese socialist cinema after 1949, Paul Clark critically analyzes what is often seen as tainted by ideology: "The presumption seems to be that, in such a politicized culture, film has been simply a political tool in the hands of the national leadership . . . this book hopes to suggest otherwise" (1). This study tackles the challenge of reading what is often referred to as propaganda in pejorative terms—cultural productions that strictly conform to the dominant state ideology and are highly censored by the state. One cannot help but wonder if a glorified sense of heroism and a utopian representation of social reality on screen were somehow blind to the actual materiality of social reality—for instance, the widespread starvation and turmoil in the countryside as a result of the Great Leap Forward. How do we negotiate the disjunction between a glorified reality on screen and the stark reality off screen? To tackle that disjunction, this study probes into the pleasurable and political nature of propaganda.

Propaganda has to be pleasurable in order for it to be an attractive and effective ideological form.

Rather than interpellating an audience in an Althussian sense, Chinese revolutionary cinema is highly accessible and entertaining. As Ban Wang has suggested, the use of classical Hollywood narration and the dual plot of romance and work sublimate sexual desire and create romantic enticement for revolutionary purposes (124). The kinesthetic rhythm generated by montage stimulates the senses visually and aurally. Although Sergei Eisenstein believed in the montage of attractions in generating a leap from sensory experience to rational thinking and to revolutionary practice, Chinese revolutionary cinema avoided Eisenstein’s idea of an intellectual cinema and invested in cinematic stimulation of the senses. Chinese revolutionary cinema’s focus on sight and sound, punctuated by montage and the relay of gazes, produced a cinematic experience that was entertaining and educational. The moments of forgetfulness and diegetic absorption that Chinese revolutionary cinema produces function as a distraction from a stark social reality and an attraction to a glorified and heroic revolutionary cause. A nuanced understanding of film aesthetics that accounts for the attractions of montage and the glamour of positive heroines provides us the critical tools to understand the pleasurable and political nature of Chinese revolutionary cinema as an ideological form.

In the broader framework of communist culture and film aesthetics, Chinese revolutionary cinema engaged in a sophisticated dialogue with international cinema, including its communist counterparts, through the work of translation and film criticism. More than just political propaganda in the hands of the national leadership, Chinese revolutionary cinema is a testament to a radical aesthetic revolution that made a significant impact on Chinese film history and international film discourse.

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